

MEDIA SPOTLIGHT



A BIBLICAL ANALYSIS OF RELIGIOUS & SECULAR MEDIA

SPECIAL REPORT

THE VINEYARD HISTORY, TEACHINGS & PRACTICES

by Albert James Dager

The history of the Vineyard as outlined in this report is a compilation of several testimonies from persons who were involved with the Vineyard movement from the beginning. Every detail has been established by the testimony of no less than two or three witnesses.

In 1963 a young jazz musician by the name of John Wimber made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ. The impact his life would have on the Body of Christ could not have been guessed at.

Within two years he was teaching Bible studies and, according to his testimony, along with his wife Carol he led hundreds of people to Christ over the next eight years. In 1970 he joined the staff as an assistant pastor at the Yorba Linda Friends Church (Quaker) in Yorba Linda, California.

A controversy arose when the pastor, Bill Freeman, experienced a profound change in his understanding of the gifts of the Spirit, and began to share it from the pulpit. Wimber stood against the gifts of the Spirit, and there occurred a split among the congregation. Freeman was removed as pastor by Keith Sarver, the District Superintendent of the Society of Friends, and was replaced by Barney Shafer. Freeman went on to become associated with Witness Lee and the Local Church movement, attaining considerable status there. Wimber would later state that he regretted coming against what he did not recognize at the time as a move of the Holy Spirit.



JOHN WIMBER - APOSTLE OF THE VINEYARD

In 1974 Wimber left the pastorate of Yorba Linda Friends Church to join the staff of the Charles E. Fuller Institute of Evangelism and Church Growth at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. For four years he studied factors that lead to church growth. This led to his traveling throughout the United States, teaching pastors about that subject. He was impressed by the statistics which showed that the most dramatic growth was being enjoyed by Pentecostal and charismatic churches. The many Pentecostals and charismatics he met attributed their success to "combining proclamation of the gospel with works of power of the Holy Spirit."¹

A low key, warm and affable person, John Wimber is likened by many to a big teddy bear. Yet in spite of his outward congeniality and success in ministry, Wimber was discontent. He began to struggle with his convictions as a dispensationalist which contrasted with the evidence he encountered that suggested the gifts of the Spirit are still operative today. This was in large part due to the fact that his wife had become a charis-

matic. She had undergone what she called a "personality meltdown" through the work of the Holy Spirit to change her attitude toward charismatics.²

Wimber testifies that, in addition to his wife's influence, his attitude toward signs and wonders greatly changed not because of his study of Scripture, but as a result of the reported growth of Pentecostal and charismatic churches:

Because of my theological background, I was sceptical about their claims of healing. But I couldn't write them off, because of their undeniable growth. So I visited their bookstores and picked up literature written by or about men like John G. Lake, William Branham, F.F. Bosworth, John Alexander Dowe, and so on. Their writings may not have convinced me that they had great theological insight, but they did convince me that they were not frauds. And they awakened in me thought concerning my earlier, unexplainable evangelistic experiences. It began to dawn on me that perhaps some of my experiences were somehow related to the ministry of the Holy Spirit.³

Wimber's understanding of the gifts of the Spirit was further changed through encounters at Fuller's School of World Mission:

While this was going on I was getting involved at Fuller's School of World Mission, where I served as an adjunct faculty member. At Fuller I had the honour of meeting professors like Donald McGavran, Charles Kraft, Paul Hiebert, C. Peter Wagner, and the School of Theology's Russell Spittler. I was also introduced to the writings of George Eldon Ladd, specifically his work on the kingdom of God. Seminary courses and reports of signs and wonders from the Third World softened my heart considerably towards the Holy Spirit and the charismatic gifts, especially as they were related to evangelism.⁴

Of all those he met while at Fuller, the man who would have the most impact on Wimber's philosophy was C. Peter Wagner, alleged expert on church growth, and a strong proponent of signs and wonders for the purpose of church growth.

During his tenure at Fuller Wimber met many pastors from the Third World whose reports of dramatic signs and wonders resulting in church growth convinced him to study the relationship between spiritual gifts and evangelism. The result was his development of what he called "power evangelism," predicated upon the supposition that the Gospel is largely ineffective unless accompanied by signs and wonders.

THE BEGINNING OF VINEYARD

For some time in 1975, two members of the Yorba Linda Friends Church, Bob Fulton and Richard Wickwire, had been meeting to pray once a week, seeking a closer walk with the Lord. After awhile a friend of theirs, Carl Tuttle, joined with them. The meetings moved to Sunday evenings at Wickwire's home and others were invited to attend.

The group, which numbered around ten at the time, practiced the Quaker form of communion, sharing Scripture, insight, prayers, songs and testimonies. No one in particular was in charge of the meetings. Carl Tuttle led worship with his guitar; some had spontaneous songs from verses they had learned. Since the meetings were held in Richard Wickwire's home, he was the one generally agreed to be in charge, though he never imposed that position upon the group; it was just more or less understood.

As the group increased in number, all the sitting room was taken. People began to sit on the floor, elbow-to-elbow. Eventually the rooms adjacent to the living room were full. Soon there was standing room only for the increasing numbers who attended, the crowd reaching out the door and onto the front porch. People had to park their cars blocks away.

Even before the group had grown so much, the pastors at the Friends Church began to take notice. The youth pastor, concerned about the reports he had been hearing, and knowing that many of the church's youth were attending, came to check it out. He left satisfied, although the group did tend to "behave," toning down the emphasis on spiritual gifts whenever anyone from the Friends Church came by.

John Wimber visited about one year after the group had begun to meet. His wife had come several times, but Wimber's arrival created a stir since he had been known to resist the idea that the gifts of the Spirit are available today. At the time no one had spoken in

tongues in the meetings, but many were sharing that they had done so privately.

Wimber seemed to like what he saw, although he didn't attend again for another couple of months. He began to attend more regularly, however, and on one occasion brought a long-time friend, Lawrence "Gunner" Payne, to whom Wimber attributes his conversion.

The group had heard about Payne, and he was presented to them as "a mighty man of God." They felt very honored that he would visit them.

Wimber's account of how he came to pastor this group is told in his book, *Power Healing* (Harper & Row):

Shortly after returning home from Detroit, Carol urged me to attend one of her home meetings. The little fellowship met in a small house without air conditioning. The people worshiped God, sang, read Scripture, and sweated. Every now and then someone would lift his or her hands, something I was not used to. "Oh no," I thought, "what has Carol gotten me into?" But, despite my reservations, there was something I could not deny although I did not understand it: everyone seemed so happy and full of joy. Could God want his people packed in a hot room, singing and sweating late into the night? I was spiritually blind to what God was doing in the group.

After the meeting Carol and I went out for a hamburger. I was already in an irritable mood (because of the meeting) when Carol started telling me how her life was changing. The main source of her change came from Ralph C. Martin's book *Hungry for God*. She said that what he wrote about the close nature of our relationship with Christ had been a vehicle for her opening her life more fully to the power [of] the Holy Spirit. I said, "I suppose next you're going to tell me that you speak in tongues."

"Yep," she said. I was too shocked to respond.

Then she questioned me about the prayer meeting. She asked, "Well, what do you think about the meeting?"

"It's not going anywhere," I answered. "There's no leadership. There's no direction. It won't last."

Carol hesitated, then turned to me and said, "John, I've always said that I didn't want you to be a pastor again, but if God should ever speak to you about that I want you to know that I'm for it."

During the next two and a half months God indicated his desire for me to return to the pastorate. For example, once when I was flying in an airplane with C. Peter Wagner, he turned to me and said, "John, why don't you go home and start a church in Yorba Linda?" A few days after this I was in New York City conducting a church growth seminar when a Lutheran pastor came to me and said, "I feel awkward about this, because I never experienced anything like it before. But God gave me a message for you. I wrote it down. Here it is. I do not understand it." I took the message and he walked away. I opened the scrap of paper and read these words: "Go home." The Lord's direction was clear, so I obeyed him and returned to the pastorate.

On Mother's Day in May of 1977, I preached my first sermon as pastor of what is now called the Vineyard Christian Fellowship.⁵

On the basis of these subjective "words of knowledge," Wimber decided that he should pastor the group meeting in the Wickwire's home, which had grown considerably.

In March, 1977, the Wimbbers invited certain members of the group to their cabin at Lake Arrowhead in the San Bernardino Mountains of Southern California. The day was spent in fellowship, song, prayer and worship. In the evening, John Wimber took the opportunity to speak. One of those in attendance recalls his words:

"Well I guess you all are wondering why I've asked you here," he said. "The Lord has put some things on my heart and has been talking to me about what He is doing." He went on to explain some more, then said, "The Lord has shown me this is a church; it is coming out [of the Friends Church], and I am the pastor."

Afterward, a few of us were so upset about the announcement that we went into a bedroom

and prayed together. We all felt that Richard, not John, was the pastor. Since John had never been baptized we felt he was not really qualified to be a pastor. And yet, when the controversy surfaced at the church, and John announced on a Sunday evening that the next weekend we were going to start the new church in Yorba Linda Park, we followed!

It was raining the first day, so a Mason friend of John's gave him the keys to the Masonic lodge for his use. I wish I had a picture of the two thrones, royal blue, ornate, and the pentagram in the royal blue carpet. I sat in the front row, Carl led worship, and John and Bob sat on thrones. I didn't have a clue of what a pentagram was, or what the Masonic lodge was, or what the thrones meant. I just rejoiced for being there.

As he stood in the pulpit that first day John stated, "I have good news for you. We are no longer illegitimate; we are not a bastard child. We have a name. We're a Calvary Chapel."

With that I sighed a great sigh of relief, because John was under authority, and I believed Chuck Smith would take care of it all.⁶

That Bob Fulton, one of the leaders of the group, is John Wimber's brother-in-law by marriage to Carol's sister Penny didn't hurt Wimber's takeover.

Wimber's pastoral association with Calvary Chapel came about through Don McClure, who was heading up Calvary Chapel's school of ministry at Lake Arrowhead. Wimber's cabin was close by, and Wimber had been attending the services there on Sundays, unknown to the group. After announcing to the group that he was their pastor, Wimber approached McClure with the proposition that he had a flock that he wanted to bring under the Calvary Chapel covering.

Wimber's telling of how he became pastor of the group gives no clue as to how he took it over:

In 1978 God spoke to me about returning to the pastorate, something I viewed with a great deal of apprehension. But with the encouragement of my wife and Peter Wagner, I resigned my position at the Institute of Evangelism and Church Growth and

returned to the pastorate, a wayward shepherd coming to serve a tiny flock.⁷

Wimber's beginnings as a charismatic pastor were tentative. He readily admitted that he didn't know what he was doing, but that God had placed him there nevertheless. Much of what he taught did not set well with some in the group:

It was very difficult not to take exception to much of what John taught. He took a philosophical and experimental approach toward the subject matter, cited statistics of church growth, waxed eloquent on items of "historical note," stated pros and cons of the authorship of books and biblical texts, commented on Ezekiel's rumored "dementia," etc., and basically emphasized church growth and paradigm shifts.

I have to admit, as a personally compromised and ignorant sheep I was comparing John's teaching to what I'd heard from Chuck Smith and J. Vernon McGee, not to what I had learned through any astute scholarship on my part.

John indicated that in the past he had not believed much in the "supernatural," and spent great amounts of time expounding on biblical proof texts and other matters of seminary interest that frankly intimidated and confused some of us. We all forgave him frequently because he openly admitted that he didn't know what he was doing. He said it was all an "experiment," and that he had thwarted the work of God in the past and didn't want to "touch" it now.

So we tolerated Jonah's whale being most probably, "according to experts," a dogfish, and Naomi's sons dying as a result of her disobedience to God when she followed her husband into Moab. We also tolerated John's proclamation that he now lived extended periods of time in his life without sinning. Our toleration was pretty much the same as one tolerates their child who counts by saying, "one, two, twee, seben, six, nine." John appeared to be sincere in his ideas and, therefore, a candidate for the Lord to change. Many

were concerned that he was not yet a baptized believer, and he didn't know which of the gifts were applicable today.

Many of us rejoiced the day Don McClure came to baptize John and Bob, and then John and Carl baptized all the rest of the candidates in John's swimming pool. It seemed like progress to us. If at the time we had understood what the Scriptures mean when they say not to lay hands suddenly on anyone, and had recognized how backwards everything was, perhaps we could have avoided what was to come. But in those days we took the attitude, "well, the Lord knows what He is doing."⁸

(The person whose testimony is related has been labeled by Vineyard leadership as a "troublemaker," a "nut case," a "malcontent," "demonized," and other assorted uncomplimentary terms. She was one of several on a list that Wimber had marked from the start as "uncooperative." In fact, however, she desired to submit to Wimber as long as he submitted to Scripture, and was bold enough to confront him on his errors. Her testimony has been branded as a "fabricated story," yet I have validated every detail of her statement by the testimony of at least two or three witnesses who were present at the start of Wimber's pastorate over the group. I have found her quite sane and very credible, having verified her testimony with others.)

It wasn't long before Wimber began to categorize methodologies for healing, music ministry, leadership, outreach, evangelism, etc. All aspects of body life became studies of method.

Within a short time Wimber brought on Sam Thompson, a licensed psychologist, as an assistant pastor in charge of counseling. Thompson developed the ministerial aspects of the Vineyard, combining psychological theory with charismatic practices. He taught how to look for signs of spiritual and physical problems, and how to deal with them.

The emphasis was, and still is, on attaining spiritual power. The congregation would stand in circles, holding hands and commanding demons to manifest themselves in order to cast them out. To their consternation, eventually strange manifestations did begin to occur, such as screeching, barking, levitation, etc. For the most

part, the group found themselves unable to cope with what they were conjuring up. This, however, did not dissuade Wimber from continuing his "experiment" in the hope that spiritual power would one day become common place for them.

Feelings of resentment and insecurity were beginning to be felt by almost all the original group. Yet the church was growing in numbers, and had the outward appearance of a typical Calvary Chapel.⁹

In relating the beginning of the Vineyard in his books, Wimber doesn't mention his stint with Calvary Chapel, and for good reason. At the time, Chuck Smith wanted to provide training for the Calvary Chapel pastors who had no formal seminary background. Wimber offered to lead the school and train the Calvary Chapel pastors in ministry. To this Chuck Smith agreed. Unknown to Smith, however, Wimber, believing himself to be an apostle, also wanted to unite the pastors under his personal direction. Until that time they had been autonomous in their ministries. Also unknown to Smith, the training focused more on church growth through "power evangelism" and "signs and wonders," than it did on the elements Smith desired for the Calvary Chapel pastors. So Wimber's "signs and wonders" philosophy was developing and gaining adherents under the Calvary Chapel label.

Little known to those unfamiliar with Wimber's proselytizing methods, the tremendous growth of the Vineyard cannot be attributed to the validity or the evidence of signs and wonders as much as to gleaning from other established congregations. Most notably in the early years were several Calvary Chapels, whose pastors Wimber proselytized to his signs and wonders philosophy while ostensibly training them for Chuck Smith.

In 1982, at a meeting of certain Calvary Chapel pastors to plan their upcoming pastor's conference, the beginning of the end of Wimber's association with Calvary Chapel unfolded. Present was Kenn Gulliksen, who was the founder and pastor of the original, fledgling Vineyard fellowship in the San Fernando Valley of Southern California. Under Gulliksen's direction since 1974, and operating under the broad umbrella of Calvary Chapel, the Vineyard had grown to several congregations.

At the meeting, a number of the Calvary Chapel pastors voiced their

concerns about reports they had heard from people attending Wimber's Yorba Linda fellowship. They began to ask Wimber about the reports of people levitating, being "slain in the spirit," engaging in aura reading, and other bizarre practices.

Wimber, bristling under the questioning, responded that he had been thinking that he should be leaving Calvary Chapel. His words to Smith—who had remained silent up to this point—were, "Maybe the pen isn't big enough for two bulls." Smith's response to this veiled allusion of equality in authority was that he never considered himself a bull in a pen.

In the course of the conversation, Wimber made two statements in defense of the manifestations at Yorba Linda on which Smith challenged him: 1) "God is above His Word"; and 2) "God is not limited by His Word." In other words, Wimber did not need a scriptural basis for the manifestations.

Since Calvary Chapel's premise rests on the belief that all practices must be grounded in Scripture, and because Kenn Gulliksen spoke up in Wimber's defense, Chuck Smith suggested that Wimber align himself with Gulliksen's Vineyards and dissociate himself from the Calvary Chapel name. This was to avoid confusion among people who questioned why these manifestations were occurring at a Calvary Chapel.

With no further word to Smith in the ensuing months, Wimber did align himself with the Vineyards which made a concerted break from Calvary Chapel. Smith even went so far as to offer the Calvary Chapel pastors the opportunity to either remain with Calvary Chapel and stress the teaching of Scripture, or follow after Wimber and stress manifestations. Many chose to follow Wimber, converting their churches to Vineyards.

It wasn't long before Wimber's influence moved Gulliksen to second spot and he was sent out as a church planter for the Vineyard movement. Gulliksen started the Vineyard in Newport Beach, California. When it had attained some degree of success, he was moved to Boston to start over.

To date, Vineyard has grown to five hundred congregations in eight countries. They claim some one hundred thousand members.¹⁰ However, believing that a church must avoid becoming a "big business," Wimber has stated that he would break up the Vineyard after ten or fifteen years:

"We intended to stay here 10 or 15 years and then disband," he said. "We believe that any church only exists one generation at a time."¹¹

The Vineyard under Wimber's headship is now about 14 years old. It remains to be seen if he will follow through on his promise.

When relating the history of the Vineyard movement in his books, none of these facts relating to Calvary Chapel, *et al*, are presented by Wimber. Yet in the Forward to *Power Healing*, Richard Foster commends Wimber for his "honesty" in the telling of Vineyard's beginnings.¹² He also affirms Wimber's apostolic role and claims that "John speaks with the confidence of one who is living out of the divine Center."¹³

Richard Foster is the founder of *Renovaré*, an organization that stresses the contemplative and meditative techniques of Roman Catholic mysticism as a means to "practice the presence of God." (See our special report *Renovaré: Taking Leave of One's Senses*.) The concept of a "divine Center" is not biblical; it is an Eastern mystical term implying that God is a universal consciousness residing within everyone, guiding them on the path to evolutionary perfection.

In 1982, shortly after taking over the Vineyard, Wimber returned to Fuller Theological Seminary to co-teach with C. Peter Wagner a course entitled MC:510, "The Miraculous and Church Growth." In effect, MC:510 was a laboratory for experiments in signs and wonders. The class caused both great joy and great consternation among the faculty and staff at Fuller. While it broke all enrollment records, it was viewed as heretical by some.

Eventually MC:510 was dropped by Fuller, but by then the influence of charismatic—and particularly psychological integrationism—had taken firm root in that institution's foundation.

THE VINEYARD PHILOSOPHY

The Vineyard philosophy of signs and wonders is expressed primarily in the teachings of John Wimber. Although others within the organization offer their own insights, John Wimber stands as the apostle and prophet of the Vineyard movement. Major points he emphasizes are:

- The need for a paradigm shift in the Church (we must change our Western world view to that which integrates reliance upon supernatural influences);

- The charismatic movement is "where it's at" in church growth;
- Home groups are also "where it's at";
- He (Wimber) wanted to be "where it's at";
- He didn't want to miss out on anything God wanted to do;
- We should be doing the "stuff" Jesus did;
- The supernatural practices beginning to emerge were of the Lord, and to be desired and pursued (i.e., hot, tingly sensations indicating healing taking place during prayer; trance-like euphoric states of "worship" characterized by a restful "alpha-wave"-type feeling, which is verification of the "presence" of the Lord; supposed "words of knowledge," "discerning of spirits," "personal prophecy," etc.);
- Every believer can walk, talk and do the very things Jesus and the apostles did;
- The signs-and-wonders movement is the third wave of God's power manifesting in the 20th century (the first wave was turn-of-the-century Pentecostalism; the second wave was the charismatic movement);
- We are involved in spiritual warfare to take the Kingdom by force; For this the major weapon is "power evangelism."

The Paradigm Shift

Wimber states that the Western Church is largely out of touch with the power of God because of Western materialism. Third World countries are more open to God's power because they have a different world view or "paradigm."

Many evangelicals sincerely think that their thinking on such issues as healing or power evangelism is formed by the Bible alone. They are unaware of how powerful the influences of a Western materialistic worldview are, and how that worldview affects their interpretation of Scripture in general, and specifically their perception of the supernatural in scripture.

Most Western Christians must undergo a shift in perception to become involved in a signs and wonders ministry, a shift towards a worldview that

makes room for God's miraculous intervention. It is not that we allow God's intervention: he does not need our permission. The shift is that we begin to see his miraculous works and allow them to affect our lives. (emphasis in original)¹⁴

We in the West, he insists, must shift our paradigm to include the intuitive as well as the rational. The intuitive he equates with openness to God's power.

There is no doubt that Western Christianity has failed in many instances to acknowledge that God is still at work in miraculous ways. But unless one keeps a biblical perspective of God's power one risks transgressing into the realm of the occult. Satan's power is often demonstrated through apparent signs and wonders that result in temporal good. The feats of Hindu "holy men" are beyond human comprehension. And at the seat of their power is more than the human psyche and its ability to implement mind-over-matter phenomena. Satan is the father of lies who appears as an angel of light. And his ministers appear as ministers of righteousness.

Satan has no qualms about spouting biblical truth or about exalting Jesus, provided he can inject into the observer's consciousness sufficient error to lead away from the ultimate truth of Scripture. Many deceptions come in the name of Jesus, even extolling a sound Christology.

Looking at the influences in Wimber's paradigm shift (originally a New Age term suggesting a shift from Western materialism and pragmatism to Eastern spirituality), we can see how he has crossed the line from sound biblical truth to Eastern spiritual methodologies, while espousing a biblical Christology. The fact is that the Vineyard does adhere to a sound Christology and basically sound doctrine in statement. But the words don't line up with the deeds. While saying that the Bible is the final authority for all practice, Wimber also teaches that a practice doesn't have to be supported by Scripture to be accepted as from God.

Power Evangelism

In simple terms, "power evangelism," according to Wimber, means the combining of the proclamation of the Gospel with the demonstration of supernatural power through the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The premise is that signs and wonders such as healing,

raising the dead, and other miracles, are especially effective as tools to reinforce the truth of the Gospel. Wimber has said that the Gospel is largely ineffective without signs and wonders:

...Preaching and demonstrating the gospel are not mutually exclusive activities; they work together, reinforcing each other.¹⁵

If this is true, then the Gospel alone can never be effective without signs and wonders accompanying it. That Wimber had led "hundreds" of people to Christ by presenting only the Gospel prior to his new-found theology seems to have been forgotten.

The truth is that the preaching of the Gospel is what produces within the hearer the faith to believe (faith comes by hearing a word about Christ [Romans 10:17]). If the Lord chooses to demonstrate His power in a palpable manner it will be through a sovereign work of His Holy Spirit, not through the methodologies of man striving to accomplish something in the flesh.

Yet Wimber is correct in one sense: unless a person believes God can and does act in miraculous ways today, that person cannot minister in certain circumstances. Although God can even minister through those who hold doubts, the reality is that God seldom overrides man's unbelief unless it is for a purpose known to God alone.

The point is that one cannot assume how God will work in any given situation, except that He will not violate His Word. His sovereignty allows for any possibility within that framework. While we find that Vineyard claims for healing are considerably overstated, overstatement is also found in Wimber's account of Jesus' ministry:

As I searched the Gospels to learn more about the gifts, I discovered another significant point: Jesus always combined the proclamation of the kingdom of God with its demonstration (the casting out of demons, healing the sick, raising the dead, and so on). The spiritual gifts took on new meaning for me. Scripture indicated that they authenticated the gospel, cutting through people's resistance and drawing attention to the good news of Jesus Christ. No wonder Jesus was so effective in evangelism.¹⁶

Such simplistic descriptions of biblical events characterize charismatics'

attempts to justify unbiblical and extra-biblical teachings and practices.

Whether Jesus "always" combined proclamation with demonstration is disputable. Matthew, Chapter 13, describes Jesus preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom to a multitude as he stood in a ship. Nowhere throughout that passage are any miracles related, although Mark's account describes the calming of the storm after the disciples set out to cross the sea following Jesus' discourse. It doesn't speak of any miracles related to His preaching.

Yet even if Jesus did always demonstrate power with His preaching, He is uniquely the incarnate Son of God whose ministry was calculated to bring the truth of God's Kingdom to a people whose religious leaders had kept the truth from them. He was on the verge of establishing a New Covenant, and the miracles were incontrovertible proof of His authority to do so. Yet He did not fail to justify His ministry by appealing to the Scriptures for validation. He knew Satan could duplicate some miraculous signs, but Satan's "miracles" would fail the test of Scripture by leading away from God's truth.

We can allow how some overstatements are made in the name of zeal. But in Wimber's case he has overstated not only Jesus' ministry but the results and purpose of His ministry. By saying, "no wonder Jesus was so effective in evangelism," Wimber ignores the testimony of Scripture. The reason Jesus spoke to the people in parables was so that they would *not* understand the truths He was imparting, which were reserved for the children of the Kingdom (Matthew 13:10-17; 34-35, Mark 4:10-12).

Additionally, in spite of Jesus' demonstrations of power, many refused to follow Him because they were offended by His sayings (Matthew 13:54-57; 15:12, Mark 6:1-3). Many who did follow Him eventually left Him when His sayings became too difficult for them. John, Chapter 6, begins with a multitude following Jesus because of His miracles, only to abandon Him because they were offended by His sayings (John 6:59-66). A careful reading reveals that Jesus purposely drove them away by speaking hard truths even after they had commended Him for His ministry. This is hardly "effective evangelism" by Wimber's standards.

In the long run, Jesus was abandoned by almost all the multitudes, and only a handful of disciples remained faithful even after the Resurrection.

The Other Side Of Pragmatism

Wimber suggests that we must demonstrate supernatural power in order to win souls, especially among "primitive peoples":

Primitive peoples often need to see the superior power of the gospel demonstrated for them to believe.¹⁷

First, there is no such thing as "primitive peoples." Mankind is unchanged since his creation. What has changed is his knowledge of science, which has produced some advanced civilizations. But this is a common error committed by many Christians who fail to see the evolutionary implications of such a term.

Second, Wimber fails to see that reliance upon signs and wonders for belief is just as pragmatic as intellectual investigation of the Gospel. Jesus said that it is better to believe without seeing outward evidence. He said to Thomas,

Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed. (John 20:29)

True, lasting faith comes to those who do not need signs and wonders to validate God's truth. The flesh looks for a sign; the Holy Spirit impresses the truth upon our minds if we are willing to receive it on its own merits.

While there are many who have been led to Christ through signs and wonders, there are far more who have believed the Gospel without the evidence of signs and wonders. Often, those who rely upon the miraculous to substantiate initial faith in Christ lose that faith if the miraculous does not continue for them, or if persecution, temptation or other ills beset them.

Experience is a weak premise upon which to build lasting faith which will stand in the time when God seems most distant and His power least effective. Many who caught on fire for the Lord because of what they witnessed, have walked away when they perceived that God was no longer working in their lives in a palpable manner. Hebrews 11:32-40 demonstrates what true faith will endure. After speaking of the mighty things done through faith, the writer extols the virtues of those who suffered much as a result of faith.

The greatest sign and wonder that God can perform is that which changes the spiritual condition of man, not that which changes the external, material environment. Insistence upon miracu-

lous signs for validation of truth is the ultimate pragmatism even above that of Western materialism.

Miracles are not the means to engender belief. Jesus said that, even if one were to rise from the dead, men would still not believe (Luke 16:31). And it was the Bereans' searching of the Old Testament Scriptures that caused them to believe (Acts 17:10-12), not signs and wonders.

Method Ministry

The problem with the Vineyard's ministry is not that it insists that the gifts of the Spirit are still operable today; it is the assumption that the gifts of the Spirit can be manifested through a particular methodology. Also, that every supernatural gift of the Holy Spirit should be manifested in every believer on a regular basis. This, in fact, is what has plagued the Pentecostal and charismatic churches for years. The abuses and excesses of human flesh masquerading as the work of the Holy Spirit have contributed to the denial of God's power being operative today by some who recognize the flesh at work.

Yet most non-charismatics would not say that God *cannot* or will *never* manifest His power through His people. (After all, if we don't believe in God's intervention, why pray?) They would say that the gifts as recorded in Scripture were given for a time to validate the New Covenant according to God's sovereignty; today, when God works miraculously it is still His sovereignty at work according to *His* will, not man's.

The problems associated with charismatism in general, and with the Vineyard in particular, is partly due to poor theology and a lack of understanding of God's sovereignty. Even though Vineyard teachers often stress God's sovereignty, they apparently don't really understand it. They seem to think that God's sovereignty extends over Satan and his kingdom, and over the kingdoms of the world, but not over God's own people when it comes to exercising the gifts of the Spirit.

Compounding the problem is the penchant on the part of those obsessed with signs and wonders to cite Scripture erroneously in order to validate their attempts at getting God to work in their behalf. An example is Wimber's citing of Jesus' miracles to validate power evangelism. In fact, he believes that Jesus taught His disciples *how* to perform signs and wonders:

But Christ's method of training is difficult for Western Christians to understand. There are several reasons for this. Evangelicals emphasise accumulating knowledge about God through Bible study. Christ was more action oriented; his disciples learned by doing as he did.¹⁸

The disciples learned from Jesus how to do the works of the kingdom. They might not have always understood the purpose of his miracles, but they learned how to do signs and wonders with remarkable success.¹⁹

Through mutual commitment, Jesus made disciples out of the Twelve. He developed mature character and leadership in them. He trained them to do signs and wonders. They were hitched together for three years, and when released, the disciples continued to walk in his way. They performed signs and wonders and trained the next generation to perform them also.²⁰

No, Jesus did not train His disciples how to perform signs and wonders. Nor did He train them in leadership. Such statements assume that man initiates God's power. In truth, the disciples were amazed when they discovered that the Holy Spirit was working through them when Jesus sent them out (Luke 10:17).

The Lord initiated the purpose and the means for sending the seventy disciples: to prepare for His visitation by proclaiming that the Kingdom of God was near. He did not *train* them on how to cast out demons. When one is sent by God he will be equipped by God. We must focus on the task, and praise God for whatever He does in using us for that task.

There are many ways in which the Vineyard's attempts at signs and wonders differ from the simple, direct and unfailing ministry of the Holy Spirit.

With the Vineyard method, in order to effect a healing one must "interview" the subject, often taking him or her back into the past to relive circumstances (inner healing) that may have lead to their problem. Casting out demons is likewise a process that may take days or even years. The byword for all Vineyard ministry is method.

Surprisingly, Wimber claims that methodologies are not valid:

Most of us are confused about how to live a life of faith. We cannot understand or relate to the enormous efforts it took to do the things that Jesus did. The reason is that too often we are searching for methods, formulas and principles that will open the power of God to us, becoming frustrated each time we try another 'key' that does not work.²¹

As you read these pages [in *Power Healing*] I urge you to seek not formulas and methods for gaining a temporary reprieve from sickness and death; I urge you to seek the Lord and Lifegiver himself, Jesus Christ. That way, regardless of the visible results, your prayers will always have power for healing.²²

If there are no "visible results," there are no results, period. Either one is healed or not. If one is healed, there will be visible results. Such a statement is a cop-out for the many failures to see immediate (if ever) results. It's a denial of reality in the face of failure.

In spite of Wimber's statements that seem to warn against the use of methodology, it is methodology that typifies the Vineyard form of ministry. Their methods include inner healing techniques, visualization, meditation and psychological integration. Wimber's book, *Power Evangelism*, has been updated to include a study guide on how to perform signs and wonders, replete with methodologies.

From the very beginning until the present, Wimber's power evangelism has operated through methodology. The Introduction for his training manual on healing states:

This section is a continuation of the emerging integrated model. Now that we have understood the values and priorities that undergird our practice of healing, we can discuss methodology and the observations that we have made in response to what God has taught us. Keep in mind that you cannot apply the method without having first built into your life the underlying values and priorities, otherwise there will be frustration and eventual failure. In the first part on methodologies we will cover the general practice—the healing process, healing the spirit, healing past hurts, healing the body, healing the demonized, healing

those in hospitals. Under observations we will cover spiritual phenomena, perspective on ministry, view of medicine, spiritual warfare.²³ (emphasis ours)

The methodologies outlined in the manual are based on the inner healing model of Agnes Sanford. Wimber suggests the team approach to healing, with two to five people performing the following steps in the method:

- a. One to lead.
- b. Another to pray.
- c. Someone else to observe
- d. And a person to record what is happening.
- e. The team should be able to interchange intermittently.²⁴

In the section entitled "Perspective on Ministry," Wimber states that "Some people are natural healers in the sense of their warmth and the atmosphere they bring."²⁵

This is not a biblical observation, but one based on a psychic healing methodology. "Natural healers" are what shamans, witches and mystics claim to be. These people are trained in their practice; they are not gifted by the Holy Spirit.

Wimber's belief that men can be trained to do signs and wonders, and his faulty understanding of how God's power works, are what have contributed to the error of the Vineyard methodologies.

EXPERIMENTATION

Two words characterize Wimber's methodology: experience and experimentation. In the former case, most of Wimber's teachings are anecdotal, drawing from unverifiable but seemingly credible testimonies of signs and wonders, rather than from Scripture primarily. Often Scripture is used as a proof text to validate the anecdotal.

In the latter case, Wimber encourages his disciples to experiment through trial and error. This forms the basis for his own attempts at power evangelism:

...At the core of my being I am an activist. Regarding power evangelism, this meant that I needed to field-test my new-found theology, to go out into the world and see if what I thought Scripture taught in fact worked in Western society. So in 1978 I left the Charles E. Fuller Institute of Evangelism and Church Growth to become pastor of what is now called the

Vineyard Christian Fellowship of Anaheim, California. It was in this environment, a small group of fifty people, that I first tested my theories of power evangelism.²⁶

So Wimber's "call" to the pastorate was largely the result of a desire to "field test" his theories. In effect, that small congregation provided "guinea pigs" for his "new theology." No wonder he announced to them that he didn't know what he was doing—that it was all an "experiment."

Here he was, an unbaptized theorist on spiritual warfare, playing with the spiritual lives of God's children, and telling us that God called Him to this.

But this is the method for trial and error that continues to this day:

How do we do it? Having small groups was part of our history. We have been in small groups most of our Christian life. "So," I said, "the best place for trial and error is the small group. That's where we'll start doing this as much as we're able to." And that's where some of the first healings started for us.²⁷

Are John Wimber's trial-and-error attempts to perform signs and wonders the work of one led by God's Spirit, or the work of a man desperately hoping God will validate his efforts with a sign? Because of the desire to justify fleshly attempts to demonstrate signs and wonders—even with the stated purpose of spreading the Gospel—many have wrongly interpreted God's Word and have entered into such trial-and-error "healing" ministries.

True ministry in the Holy Spirit never fails because God is the author. When we fail it is because we are acting presumptuously, which is a sin requiring repentance. But rather than repent of such presumption, Wimber encourages it:

...my story illustrates a principle that guides me in divine healing: obedience to God's word is the fundamental reason that I pray for the sick and receive prayer personally, even when I do not see healing as a result of those prayers. I decided long ago that if one hundred people receive prayer and only one is healed, it is better than if none receive prayer and no one is healed.²⁸

This is true from a humanistic, pragmatic standpoint. But God does not allow for hit-and-miss experimentation.

Of course, we should always pray for those who are suffering. But Wimber's idea of prayer goes beyond petition to commanding healing. Also, our prayers should consider God's will in the person's life with the understanding that some must suffer for a reason that perhaps we don't understand.

When we learn of Wimber's personal frustration with early attempts to heal, we better understand his philosophy of trial-and-error ministry.

But after ten months of unsuccessful prayer, I had my greatest defeat. By this time our church was meeting in a highschool gymnasium that had a curtain stretched across the stage. At the completion of each service we invited people behind the curtain to receive prayer. The gymnasium was not air-conditioned; the room was unusually hot and humid. On this occasion several men and I prayed for another man (I cannot remember what his condition was). We prayed for two hours, praying every prayer that we knew, desperate to see the man healed. Finally, in despair, we stopped. I was so disconcerted that I threw myself on the floor and began weeping. "It's not fair!" I screamed. "You tell us to teach what your book says, but you don't back up our act. Here we are; we're doing the best we can do—and nothing happens. You tell us to believe in healing and pray for healing, but you're not doing anything. Oh, God, it's not fair!" I was brokenhearted. After a few minutes I came to my senses and looked up only to see the other men lying there with me, calling out to God. We were all broken over the experience. I limped home and fell into bed, wondering what the future held.²⁹

The futility of Wimber's attempts is clearly evidenced by the fact that they were, indeed, "doing the best" they could. Man's best is not what God wants. He wants to receive the glory by initiating and empowering ministry Himself. Having begun in the flesh, it is no wonder that the Vineyard ministry continues in the flesh. Yet even the flesh will be gratified eventually, if not by God, certainly by Satan, or even by psychosomatic reactions to suggestion.

Eventually, Wimber got the breakthrough he so desperately sought. Awakened one morning by one of his newest members, he went to the man's house and prayed "a faithless prayer" for healing the man's wife's fever.

I could not believe it. She was well! I politely declined her offer of hospitality [a cup of coffee] and left. Halfway back to my car, I fully realized what had happened. All the months of questioning and despair, excitement and disappointment, revelation and humiliation—the full force of these emotions and hopes washed over me. Then I became euphoric and giddy. And I yelled at the top of my lungs, "We got one!"³⁰

Wimber's testimony continues with accounts of failure and success. Relying on the writings of well-known charismatic teachers, he developed the methodology for signs and wonders.

Interestingly, he doesn't seem to make a distinction between praying for the sick and ministering healing in the power of the Holy Spirit. He claims that Jesus prayed for the sick when, in fact, Jesus' prayers were largely reserved for the spiritual benefit of His disciples. When it came to ministering healing, casting out demons or raising the dead, He spoke to the circumstance or to the demons, and nature and demons obeyed. Why? Because Jesus, as the Creator—the Word of God incarnate—was given the authority by the Father to control nature and all of His subjects.

The Holy Spirit, sent by Jesus, possesses that same authority. God's people, if led by the Holy Spirit, may be the vessels through whom He might exercise that authority. This was evidenced through the power of the apostles in demonstrating signs and wonders to validate their office (II Corinthians 12:12, Acts 5:12; 14:3, Hebrews 2:4). In all cases of God's genuine signs and wonders, none were the result of methodology, trial-and-error, or hit-and-miss efforts. Few were the result of prayer; most were the result of direct intervention, and were instantaneous.

The trial-and-error method is the result of Wimber's belief that one can learn *how* to perform signs and wonders. However, the Holy Spirit imparts the gifts to whomever He chooses, in the manner He chooses, and when He chooses. One can learn psychic healing through occult methodologies, but God is not subject to man's foibles.

THE SAME AS JESUS?

A strong contrast between Wimber's claims and his practices emerges when we understand his basic philosophy about signs and wonders. On one hand, he states that today's Christians are able to perform all the same miracles that Jesus did, in the same way He did. But because Jesus always did the Father's will (John 8:28-29, 38; 10:32, 37-38), He did not engage in trial-and-error experimentation. In practice, even Wimber acknowledges that there are differences. An example is Wimber's acknowledgment that his healing techniques don't always work. Another example is Wimber's approach to "prophetic words":

Many if not most personal prophetic words given today are conditional, and as such are invitational, not certainties.³¹

This is a convenient way to explain why many personal prophecies do not come to pass. Yet, if the same Holy Spirit is at work in the same manner as He was in biblical times, why is "today" any different from then? Obviously, something is different somewhere.

But what about John 14:12?

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.

Wimber often cites this verse to validate his attempts at signs and wonders. To date, after over 14 years of trying, he still hasn't done as well as Jesus, let alone greater.

Yet many have struggled with this verse for centuries, wondering why no one has ever really done any works greater than Jesus did. What greater work can one do than raise the dead?

Some have claimed that they have raised the dead, but no one ever seems to offer incontrovertible proof. Nor has anyone ever gone to a cemetery and raised someone from the grave—someone of whom it could be said, "by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days" (John 11:39).

Perhaps some of the apostles did this, and it is not recorded. But there is certainly no verifiable record throughout church history that this has been done by anyone other than Jesus.

Among the Scripture passages that are difficult to understand, that of Jesus promising that His disciples would do greater works than He did is one of the most difficult. One reason is that it is

often taken out of context to justify fleshly attempts to reproduce Jesus' miracles.

Let's put John 14:12 in context with the verses surrounding it:

Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.

And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.

If ye love me, keep my commandments...

He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him...

If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me. (John 14:10-24 emphasis added)

The most striking thing about these verses is the emphasis not on signs and wonders, but on obedience to the Lord's commandments—obedience to His written Word without compromise.

The Spirit of Truth (verse 17) gave us the written Scriptures for instruction in righteousness. To base one's works on anything other than Scripture is disobedience to that written Word.

Since the time of the apostles, and especially since the fourth century, the Church has largely been apostate, having separated from the truth of Scripture. Even the Reformation only partly restored the authority of *sola scriptura*. The Protestant churches carried over much in the way of Roman Catholic heresy, and the Church as a whole has refused to separate itself from the love of the world.

All attempts to stress the need for holiness among God's people have fallen into worldliness of another sort: legalism and/or striving to keep the commandments through the power of the flesh rather than through the power of God's Spirit within.

Is it any wonder that God has remained silent in much the same manner He was silent between the closing of the Old Covenant Scriptures and the appearing of the Messiah? Judaism fell into apostasy and, while giving lip service to God's commandments, rejected the words of the prophets. It isn't that God didn't speak at all; no doubt there were faithful prophets who, while not writing Scripture, still exhorted the people to obedience.

But just like Israel, the Church has fallen into apostasy and, while offering perfect "statements of faith," has rejected in practice the words of Jesus and the apostles. It appears as if God is once again largely (though not exclusively) silent preceding Jesus' Second Coming.

Yet there is more to John 14:12 than this. Jesus applies the same promise to His own works—that He would do even greater than those He had already done:

For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. (John 5:20)

In this case, the context for the Father doing greater works through Jesus is salvation and raising the dead to eternal life:

Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.

For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel.

For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will...

Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice,

And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me. (John 5:19-30 emphasis added)

The word rendered "greater" in both John 14:12 and 5:20 is *meizon*, a comparative degree of *me-gas*, which means greater in degree.

Since the Holy Spirit inspired John to record these words of Jesus relating to the greater work that would be done in the future, and since no one has ever done greater works than Jesus ever did, scriptural context and logic require that we apply to the meaning of greater works the work of salvation and resurrection to eternal life. In that regard, Jesus' disciples have shared in God's greatest work—the salvation of souls. Yet the criterion for this greater work remains obedience to God's Word—doing the will of the Father.

PSYCHIC HEALING

In reading and hearing Wimber's testimony one is struck with the differences between his claims of signs and wonders and those related in Scripture. The methods of inner healing, including meditation, visualization and other psychic and psychological manipulations gleaned from the writings of Agnes Sanford and her disciples, are the same as those of psychic healers. So is the evidence of healing power described by Wimber. He claims that he sometimes receives pain in a part of his body that parallels the ailment in someone else. He might receive a tingling feeling, or mental images of afflictions, or what he calls "a flash of intuition about someone."³² In his criticism of the Western church, Wimber states:

...Among most Western evangelicals, the intellectual task is frequently stressed to the exclusion of the intuitive.³³

Nowhere in Scripture are such intuitive evidences related in describing the myriad signs and wonders wrought not only by Jesus and the apostles, but even by the Old Testament prophets. Yet the "intuitive" is often utilized by psychic healers.

Because Wimber has rejected the "Western worldview" and has accepted certain forms of Eastern mystical practices, he has confused the deceptions of Satan and the flesh with the power of the Holy Spirit. Although he cites psychic healing as a false system, by using the intuitive approach to healing Wimber is dabbling in the occult realm of psychic healing. His methodology includes exercises similar to those of psychic healers. One method, aura healing, is described in *The Psychic Healing Book*:

Stand near your friend. Feel for his aura by holding your hands palms down about one foot above his head. Feel for sensations of heat, fullness, or tingling. When you see, visualize, sense, or feel the aura, start to move your hands down from the head, along the neck, shoulders, arms, torso, legs, and feet. Move your hands over the entire aura in order to compare temperatures, sensations, feelings, and images that come to your own mind.³⁴

Psychic healing is predicated upon the belief that the mind is capable of both causing and healing disease.³⁵ This is also affirmed by Wimber as far as the cause of disease is concerned.³⁶

Unlike psychic healers, however, Wimber would also say that illness can be caused by Satan or demonic attack. This, too, is partially true. But contrary to Wimber's belief that Christians can be demonized, no evil can touch a child of God without God's permission. The account of Job verifies this truth. God will allow this for three reasons as revealed in Scripture:

To chastise His children (I Cor. 5:5);

To test His children (Job);

To humble and strengthen His children (II Cor. 12:7).

(The idea of Christians being "demon possessed," or demonized, is dealt with in our special report, *Deliverance: Demonization and the Christian*.)

Seldom if ever taken into account by practitioners of so-called "divine healing," is the fact that God Himself causes illness, and brings calamity upon the world:

I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.
(Isaiah 45:7)

And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD? (Exodus 4:11)

Unless one includes God's will in the equation, one will be found fighting against God in the name of Holy Spirit ministry. Not recognizing God's design, those who attempt trial-and-error healing methodologies are utilizing occult techniques. This is why the Vineyard healing teams are encouraged to use the mind-science inner healing techniques of Agnes Sanford, which include visualization, meditation, and other psychic healing methods.

The Psychic Healing Book gives examples of these methods:

Visualization is one of the most potent and widely used techniques in healing. It has been stressed for centuries in schools of Eastern mysticism and is used in nearly every contemporary school of "consciousness-raising."³⁷

In a sense, the consciousness of everything is brought to bear through the wills of two parts of the larger one organism working in unity, and everything in the cosmos agrees on the change. This mobilization of cosmic forces feels very much like a form of directed meditation or prayer. In fact, it is prayer, and nothing less is involved than the faith that moves mountains. Healing is a process in which the healer aligns himself totally with the totally harmonious energy of the cosmos—which you may prefer to see as God—and thereby becomes a clear channel through which that energy can flow. He then directs the energy to and through his friend, with whom he is in a state of conscious and intentional unity.³⁸

The idea of a universal consciousness is the basis of this even more bizarre teaching of Agnes Sanford, from whom Wimber has learned his inner healing methodology:

Consider, therefore: the unconscious mind of man does not live alone. There is a mysterious connection between the unconscious being of one person and the deep mind of another. Moreover, this connection can reach back through time and forward through time and can make rapport with the thinking of someone who lived long ago or of someone who has not yet come upon this earth—and also, as the Bible repeatedly states, with heavenly beings who have never been inhabitants of this dark planet. Now in the speaking with tongues, this power latent in the unconscious mind of all people is brought to the surface and is quickened, so that the unconscious may make rapport with the unconscious mind of someone else living anywhere upon this earth or of someone who has lived before or of some-

one who will live in the future or even of someone from heaven: some great being, light-filled, whom God uses as a messenger of light that He may lift us out of darkness into the light of immortality. The person therefore under this inspiration speaks a language which the conscious mind does not know, but which this deep area of the unconscious does know.³⁹ (emphasis Sanford)

There is so much going on here, it could take volumes to deal with it all. And it all relates to inner healing.

First, Sanford is saying that we can communicate with the dead and even with those who have not yet lived! This supposes the pre-existence of the soul, which is not biblical, but found in the ancient mysteries and the belief in reincarnation (to which Sanford also alluded).

Second, she suggests that we can speak in tongues not only to these people, but with "some great being"—"a messenger [angel] of light" who may lead us into truth. Scripture speaks of Satan as an "angel [messenger] of light" whose ministers pose as ministers of righteousness II Corinthians 11:14-15). They come in the name of Jesus, leading astray through false teachings.

Third, Sanford is espousing belief in a cosmic consciousness, identical to that of psychic healers.

Wimber would deny that he believes in a cosmic consciousness. He does hold a biblical Christology and a basically "orthodox" theology. But because he has been influenced by deceivers masquerading as ministers of the gift of healing, he has adopted their psychic healing methods. How can an apostle of Christ learn spiritual truth from those who deny Christ?

The Vineyard's inner healing methods are especially rooted in psychic healing practices which, in turn, are based on the belief in karma. Karma is said to be "the unconscious memory or knowledge of, and attachment to, unfinished relationships, unfulfilled desires, and other incomplete cycles."⁴⁰

Again, Wimber would deny a belief in karma associated with past lives. But karma does not relate only to alleged past lives; it also relates to memories of childhood and even of the womb:

It is equally karmic to act on the basis of deep memories and feelings held over from childhood or any other time in your life, and unrealized in the conscious mind.⁴¹

Take out the word "karmic" in this statement and substitute the word "consequential" and you have "Christian" inner healing, whose roots are in Jungian psychology. Carl Gustav Jung received his revelations from a spirit guide. His methods were adopted by Agnes Sanford and are spread to the Church by her teachings and those of her disciples.

Another similarity to psychic healing is laying on of hands. In all of Scripture there is only one verse that speaks of laying hands on the sick:

And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;

They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. (Mark 16:17-18)

These verses are in dispute among scholars who recognize a different style of writing from that of the rest of Mark. But since they were adopted as canon, they have been retained by virtually all the churches through the centuries. We will assume that they are canon. But what of drinking poison and taking up snakes? Why don't the Vineyards and other charismatic churches practice these things as is done by some of the backwoods snake-handling cults? Everyone wants to lay hands on others, but they won't lay hands on a snake.

In view of the large number of deceptions passing themselves off as ministry in the Holy Spirit, I propose that, before anyone is allowed to lay hands on another for healing, he or she must pass a litmus: drink some poison and pick up a poisonous snake first.

This isn't to say we cannot touch another for whom we are praying as a gesture of love; but to effect healing, the laying on of hands is more in line with this teaching on psychic healing than with scriptural ministry:

Faith healing has a reputation for being almost corny, conjuring up images of fanatic worshippers shouting, chanting, and beating their breasts in a kind of pagan ritual prayer to God. While that image may be unattractive to many people, the process that makes a revival-hall healing work is the same one that makes an aura cleaning work. In a revival-hall situation, the healing is facilitated by a strong group intention rather than just

the intention of one healer. When this kind of faith is completely secure, it does not question with its mind—it succeeds through pure will.

The process by which a healer "lays hands" on someone and effects a healing is exactly like the healing processes we've been teaching you in this book, except that direct, physical contact takes place. Healers who work by laying on hands, like psychic surgeons, find that the direct touch helps them to focus their attention and energies to the ailing part of the body.⁴²

Again, Wimber would deny such concepts as psychic surgery, and most of what is taught by psychic healers philosophically. But in practice, he has adopted virtually every form of psychic healing without being able to relate any of it to Scripture. This should be cause for concern to all believers who would have any contact with the Vineyard.

DISCREPANCIES

Wimber seems oblivious to the many contradictions in his writings. His suggestion that methodologies are improper, countered by the fact that his entire ministry is methodologically empowered, is only one such discrepancy. Another is his assertion that people come to Christ for the wrong reason, coupled with his own testimony:

Proclamation of a faulty gospel will produce faulty or, at best, weak Christians. Such is the case all too often today. Instead of a call to the King and his kingdom, people are hearing a gospel that emphasizes self: come to Jesus and get this or that need met, be personally fulfilled, reach your potential. This, however, is not the costly kingdom gospel that Christ proclaims: "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies" (John 11:25).⁴³

...The reason for my conversion to Christianity was simple: my life was in a shambles and I was told a personal relationship with Jesus Christ offered hope from despair. Certainly my conversion was not the result of sincere intellectual enquiry into the mysteries of God.⁴⁴

It appears as if Wimber has indicted himself as, "at best," a weak Christian. Yet his personal magnetism

and zeal without knowledge has catapulted him into a position of considerable influence among Christians.

Another discrepancy in Wimber's teaching is his condemnation of the ways of the world in view of the methods he promotes:

...Psalm 137:4 says, "How can we sing the songs of the Lord while in a foreign land?" How can Christians serve God's kingdom while taking on the values and lifestyles of the world? We cannot.⁴⁵

Yet the occult-oriented methodologies incorporated into Vineyard "healing" techniques are the values and lifestyles of the world.

Wimber insists that Scripture must be the basis for all belief and practice. In reality the experiences themselves are to him validation enough that they are from God, unless they come in the name of an overtly occult philosophy (i.e., mind science, T.M., est, psychic healing, or some other movement). As long as they come in the name of Jesus or are perpetrated by one who calls himself a Christian, they are accepted, even if they originated in New Age occultism or, at best, Roman Catholic mysticism. The reason for this confusion and much of the New Age terminology and practice in the churches today is that they have been brought in by those claiming to be Christians, and who cite Scriptures that seem to support their conclusions.

INFLUENCES

In order to properly understand Wimber's metamorphosis from that of a hard-line dispensationalist to an ecumenical, charismatic "apostle" and healing practitioner, one must know the influences upon his beliefs.

According to Wimber, his thinking began to undergo change as a result of his wife's influence. She, as we saw, credits Ralph C. Martin for helping her see the light on charismatic gifts. Ralph C. Martin is a Roman Catholic member of the Cursillo movement (a Roman Catholic advocacy group) who became deeply involved in the charismatic movement in the mid '60s. Martin co-founded the Word of God community whose purpose was to save the world and make it predominately Roman Catholic. As a member of a secret council in concert with the "Fort Lauderdale Five" of shepherding infamy, Martin worked in association with Cardinal Suenens to implement recruitment and

training for the Roman Catholic priesthood from within the charismatic camp. (For more information see *Vengeance Is Ours: The Church in Dominion*, by Albert James Dager [Sword Publishers]).

Wimber also credits C. Peter Wagner for influencing him at a time when he believed the charismatic gifts had ended after the first century:

...But in Dr. Wagner I encountered a credible witness, an accomplished missionary and dean of Fuller Theological Seminary's School of World Mission, who wrote that healing and deliverance from evil spirits were happening in South America today. Further, he proved that these miraculous encounters resulted in large evangelistic harvests and church growth. His book forced me to reconsider my position on the charismatic gifts, though I was still sceptical of their validity today.

With this new openness, I read books by Donald Gee (an English Pentecostal who wrote *Concerning Spiritual Gifts*) and Morton Kelsey (*Healing and Christianity*) on the charismatic gifts. Their writings, combined with first-person testimonies of the miraculous from Third World students at Fuller Theological Seminary's School of World Mission, opened me to a new understanding of the part the Holy Spirit plays in evangelism. While I did not agree with all that Gee and Kelsey wrote (and still do not), I had to reconsider much that I had been taught about the charismatic gifts.⁴⁶

Morton Kelsey's name pops up frequently in Wimber's teachings, and Wimber has even dedicated a seminar series to him. One wonders how one who claims to be an apostle of Jesus can give credibility to someone who equates the ministry of Jesus with that of a shaman—a witch doctor:

...We find that his [Jesus'] life and acts, his teaching and practice, are rather akin to a shamanism based on an intimate relationship with a loving father god (*sic*). In fact, an important study might be made comparing the ministry of Jesus with that of shamanism, but this is not the place for it. Those who are taken aback by his healing ministry and would disregard or excise it

from the New Testament record or from present-day emulation simply are ignorant of the experiences of healing universally known—and in great numbers—in most forms of shamanism. The shaman is the mediator between the individual and spiritual reality, both good and evil, and because of this the healer of diseases of mind and body. In stepping into his healing role Jesus picks up the prophetic and shamanistic strand of the Old Testament tradition already mentioned.⁴⁷

Not only do we find prophecy and extra-sensory perception, but we also discover that healing accounts for 20% of Jesus' activities. One of the reasons why modern Christians do not understand Jesus is that they think of Him as a university professor of ethics rather than a shaman.⁴⁸

Wimber evidently hopes to justify his learning from Kelsey by saying that he doesn't agree with some of his teachings. But there is no justification for learning from someone who equates Jesus with a witch doctor, or His divine ability to know with "extra-sensory perception." Kelsey's errors extend far beyond this blasphemous teaching. Anyone with a modicum of Holy Spirit discernment wouldn't touch Kelsey's writings with a ten-foot pole, let alone dedicate a teaching to him.

That would apply to many other influences whom Wimber cites in his teachings:

- Agnes Sanford, pantheist and "mother" of inner healing in the churches (see *Media Spotlight* special report, *Inner Healing: A Biblical Analysis*);
- Ruth Carter Stapleton, disciple of Agnes Sanford, who claimed that one could be "born again" by listening to great music or gazing upon certain works of art; (see *Inner Healing*);
- Dennis and Rita Bennett, disciples of Agnes Sanford, and early pioneers of the charismatic movement;
- John and Paula Sandford, pantheists, and disciples of Agnes Sanford;
- Francis MacNutt, Roman Catholic charismatic priest, disciple of Agnes Sanford, proponent of inner healing methodologies;

◦ Michael Scanlan, Roman Catholic charismatic priest, disciple of Agnes Sanford, proponent of inner healing methodologies;

◦ Kenneth E. Hagin, "father" of the word-faith movement, mentor of Kenneth Copeland, and disciple of E. W. Kenyon, whose theology was heavily influenced by science of mind teachings;

Space does not allow for more except to say that Wimber often sprinkles warnings about the New Age, the occult, and erroneous charismatic suppositions as if his power evangelism methodologies are removed from them. This, coupled with his listing in his bibliography the works of men like John MacArthur, Kurt Koch and Doug Groothuis acts as a smoke-screen, giving the impression that his theology of the supernatural is biblical, since these men's writings challenge occult-based supernatural phenomena.

Roman Catholic Influences

Wimber gives much credence to Roman Catholic sources for establishing the validity of miracles. In this regard He states:

I understand Christian healing and specifically the term "divine healing" from a distinctly Christian perspective, one that encompasses a rich heritage from both Protestant and Catholic traditions.⁴⁹

Wimber's "rich heritage" of "divine healing" includes miracles allegedly performed by Roman Catholic "saints" which validate their canonization by the Vatican. He contrasts the false claims of healing by "Elmer Ganttrys, men and women out for material gain at the expense of the faithful," with the Catholic Church's "stringent criteria" for validating true miracles from God:

...The Roman Catholic church has stringent criteria regarding miracles, introduced to ensure the authenticity of miracles, especially healing. Healing is one of the requirements for canonization of a saint's life, a supernatural seal of approval.⁵⁰

Wimber implies that the Roman Catholic approach to miracles is more trustworthy than that of Protestants:

In contrast with many Protestant theologies, Roman Catholic theology asserts the possibility of modern miracles. Francis MacNutt writes:

"In fact, healing is probably easier for Catholics to understand than for most Protestants, since we have grown up with a tradition of saints blessed with extraordinary gifts, including healing, the one that is still used as a test for canonization. Consequently, most traditional Catholics have little difficulty in believing in divine healing. What is difficult is to believe that healing can be an ordinary, common activity of Christian life."⁵¹

Besides the influence of present-day Roman Catholic charismatic priests like Michael Scanlan and Francis MacNutt, Wimber cites both Protestant and Roman Catholic sources as evidence that signs and wonders have continued unabated since the first century. The few listed here are typical of his Roman Catholic citations. They are given in his own words in order to demonstrate the degree to which he has fallen under the Roman Catholic spell:

Gregory I (the Great) 540-604

Gregory the Great was the pope from 590 to 604. His *Dialogues* (593-94) were described by the author himself as stories of "the miracles of the Fathers which were done in Italy". The *Dialogues* contain supernatural tales, dividing neatly into three classes: stories of visions, stories of prophecies, and stories of miracles.⁵²

St. Francis of Assisi (1181-1226)

St. Francis was the founder of the Franciscan Order. He had an extensive healing ministry.

[Wimber continues by citing several alleged miracles that the Roman Catholic Church attributes to Francis of Assisi.]⁵³

Vincent Ferrer (1350-1419)

Vincent was a Dominican preacher who was born in Valencia. Known as the "Angel of the Judgement" (*sic*), he preached across Europe for almost twenty years. The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* records the following:

"Vincent was disillusioned; he became gravely ill. In a vision, he was commissioned by the Lord, who was accompanied by St. Dominic and St. Francis, 'to go through the world preaching Christ.' After a year had passed Benedict permitted him to go."⁵⁴

Evidently Wimber believes the statements in the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*. Are we to believe that the then deceased "St. Dominic" and "St. Francis" appeared with Jesus to commission Ferrer? Was this the same 900-foot tall Jesus that promised Oral Roberts that He would give Roberts' City of Hope the cure for cancer?

Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556)

Ignatius was the founder of the Society of Jesus [Jesuits]. He was wounded in the Spanish army in 1521. While recuperating he read the *Life of Christ* by Ludolph of Saxony. This inspired him to become a "soldier" for Christ. He entered a monastery and spent nearly a year at ascetic practices. Here he composed the essence of *Spiritual Exercises*.⁵⁵

Ignatius founded the Jesuit order to fight the Reformation and to bring "heretics" against papal authority into subjection. The Inquisitions were one product of this "soldier for Christ."

Teresa of Avila (1515-1582)

Teresa was born in Spain and educated by Augustinian nuns. She was a Carmelite reformer, mystic, and writer. In her autobiography there are frequent accounts of the ecstasy she had experienced from God.⁵⁶

Lourdes (1858-present)

Lourdes, in France, had religious events which gave birth to the phenomena which have occurred there. These "religious events" began between February 11 and July 16, 1858. A control group was established in 1882 to handle all the material regarding the cases of miraculous cures. Between 1918 and 1956, 216 cases of miracles were recorded. A complete overview of this subject may be found in Monden's *Signs and Wonders*, pp. 194-250, where several detailed studies of the miracles are given. The cases include cures of cancer, tuberculosis, blindness, and various other diseases.⁵⁷

The "miracles" of Lourdes are attributed to the "Virgin Mary" as proof of her alleged "Immaculate Conception" without sin. The *Catholic Encyclopedia* (Thomas Nelson, Publishers), states:

A series of eighteen apparitions began Feb. 11 and ended on July 16, 1858. During this time, the Blessed Virgin Mary

appeared to fourteen-year-old Bernadette Soubirous (canonized St. Bernadette on Dec. 8, 1933) in the rock cave of Massabielle along the river Gave near Lourdes in France. At the last apparition the Blessed Mother declared her identity, saying, "I am the Immaculate Conception."⁵⁸

Is it not strange that Wimber would cite healings attributed to the dead in order to validate God's signs and wonders as ongoing since the first century? Or to validate an apparition of Mary given to confirm her alleged sinlessness? The Catholic Church does not attribute these miracles to God, but to the people whom they canonize. Of course it would say that, ultimately, the power comes from God. But where does God allow for such in His Word?

This is necromancy (communication with the dead) which is, in reality, communication with demons masquerading as the dead to deceive gullible people. This is forbidden by God:

And the soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits, and after wizards, to go a whoring after them, I will even set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people.

Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy; for I am the LORD your God. (Leviticus 20:6-7)

Jesus tells us that we are to go directly to the Father for all petitions. In fact, we are not even to ask Jesus, because the Father loves us (John 16:17-30). Jesus came to open the way to the Father so that all of His children could come directly to Him without the need for any human priests. Only those who do not know (or at least do not understand) the love of the Father would give validity to intercession by dead people.

For centuries the Roman Catholic hierarchy has interposed itself between the Father and His children through its unbiblical dogmas and traditions. It has kept Catholics ignorant of the freedom in Christ that can be theirs if they would but throw off those dogmas and traditions, and instead live by faith in Christ alone. By validating these elements of Roman Catholic mysticism, Wimber has validated the priesthood as well as the counter-Reformation, the papacy, the sinlessness of Mary, and, in effect, Roman Catholicism in total.

But why should this surprise us? Wimber's wife Carol was raised in the Roman Catholic Church. Wimber states that after having separated for awhile

over marriage difficulties, he and Carol were remarried in the Catholic Church.⁵⁹ Wimber doesn't say they renewed their marriage vows; he says they were remarried, as if they had never been married before stating their vows before a Catholic priest.

Neither John nor Carol have renounced their Roman Catholic experiences. Another reason why the occult influences of Roman Catholic mysticism find expression in the Vineyard.

Additionally, Wimber has written for the Catholic charismatic publication, *New Covenant*, (June, 1988). His article, "Why I Love Mary," didn't affirm the Catholic dogmas of Mary's sinlessness, her perpetual virginity, or her assumption into heaven. But neither did it offer any refutation of them.

Knowing the Catholic belief in Mary as "the Mother of God," and the unbiblical doctrines that attend her veneration, such an article leaves the impression that Wimber has no problem with the Catholic approach to Mary.

In his ecumenical fervor, Wimber has publicly apologized to the Archbishop of Los Angeles on behalf of all Protestants. (See John Goodwin's article, "Testing the Fruit of the Vineyard," in the second portion of this report.)

Charismatic Influences

We've already mentioned several Protestant and Catholic charismatics in the last two sections. But John Wimber has inadvertently put the charismatic movement in perspective in such an excellent way which reveals the spiritual forces behind it. He has done this by listing the major players in that movement from its inception:

The charismatic renewal differs in many respects from the Pentecostal movement. The reasons for this lie in its origins and leadership, both quite removed from Pentecostalism. I studied leaders like Dennis Bennett, Father Ralph Diorio, Father John Bertolucchi, Larry Christenson, Kevin and Dorothy Ranaghan, Ralph C. Martin, Dennis and Matthew Linn, Francis MacNutt, Father Michael Scanlan, Sister Briege McKenna, Father Edward McDonough, Agnes Sanford, Michael Harper, Michael Green, and David Watson. At the time of writing all, except Agnes Sanford and David Watson, are alive, reflecting the youth of the movement.

...It is a renewal and reforming movement within mainline Protestant and Catholic churches—very different from Pentecostalism.⁶⁰

Here Wimber reveals that many—if not most—who founded the charismatic movement are Roman Catholic clergy and laity. A trademark of many Roman Catholic charismatics is prayer "in the Spirit" to Mary and the saints. As if the Holy Spirit were an intercessor between the living and the dead.

Considering the strong Catholic influences and the ecumenical direction in which the charismatic movement swayed from its inception, it is safe to say that not only is it not a move of God, it is a great deception whose purpose is to break down the wall of separation, bringing all of Christendom back under papal authority. The subjective, experiential mysticism perpetrated in the name of the Holy Spirit by the charismatic movement is the perfect foil for breaking down the resistance of those who lack discernment.

HOLY LAUGHTER

A phenomenon that has swept through many Vineyard churches is that known as "holy laughter."

In brief, many churches are reporting spontaneous, uncontrollable laughter erupting from their congregations, even during times of solemn ceremony or messages from the pulpit. Some report uncontrollable weeping, falling to the floor in ecstatic trances, and animal noises such as barking like dogs and roaring like lions. Some stagger and reel like drunken people, unable to walk a straight line. For simplicity's sake, all these have come to be called "holy laughter," since laughter is the pre-eminent phenomenon displayed. In simple terms, it is physical manifestations in the form of virtually any expression attributed to absolute control by the Holy Spirit. Proponents of these phenomena say they are evidence of a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit in response to the people's desire to see a new sign from God.

Holy laughter was imported into the United States and Canada from South Africa through one Rodney Howard-Browne. But the major impetus for the worldwide spread of the movement erupted in 1994 at the Toronto Airport Vineyard in Toronto, Canada, pastored by John Arnott.

The bizarre exhibitions of human flesh in this movement are in every way

similar to what, for centuries, have been regarded as evidence of demonic influences. It's little wonder that the Vineyard has led the charge, considering the lack of discernment on the part of its leadership. Actually, these manifestations were in evidence during the early years of Wimber's Vineyard ministry.

(Space does not allow for a complete treatise on the subject. But the reader may request a copy of our special report, *Holy Laughter: Rodney Howard-Browne and the Toronto Blessing*.

The following information has come forth since our report, so we are including it here as an update.)

Initially, John Wimber kept a wait-and-see attitude, while validating the experiences as perhaps fleshly at times, but overall a move of God. In December, 1995, he moved to disenfranchise the Toronto Airport Vineyard. This is perceived by some as evidence that the Vineyard is acting responsibly to keep such phenomena separate from its "legitimate" ministry.

However, the reason given by the leadership of the Association of Vineyard Churches (AVC) was not that the Association rejected the goings-on at Toronto, but that the Toronto Airport Vineyard had gone "over the edge" by promoting and encouraging the animal sounds and accompanying behavior.⁶¹

In September 1994, the AVC issued guidelines which indicated that, while they were not against such phenomena, they did not want it promoted. The apparent final offense was the publication of Arnott's book, *The Father's Blessing*, which includes a chapter on the animal sounds. Yet Wimber initially endorsed the book. Evidently, other circumstances displeased him:

"I was not very happy with the book, but at first I thought it was appropriate to endorse it since John Arnott was attempting to deal with our corrections," Wimber said. But within three weeks of the book's release, Arnott made several public statements and published two articles attributing prophetic significance to animal behavior, according to Wimber. "This was more than we could handle," Wimber said.⁶²

Why would Wimber and the AVC take such harsh measures since Wimber himself had endorsed the Toronto phenomena, and since he has allowed the same behavior in his own meetings? Are they manifestations of God or not?

If so, why not allow Arnott to promote and encourage them? If not, why has the AVC not condemned them and taken similar action against the other almost 50% of Vineyard churches that encourage the phenomena?

Actually, neither Wimber nor the AVC are sure if the phenomena are of God or not. The following excerpts from John Wimber's letter to the Vineyard churches regarding the phenomena demonstrate a vacillating position:

A. I would say that there is no biblical or theological framework for such phenomena. I don't see anywhere in the New Testament where Jesus and/or the apostles encouraged such phenomena or encountered such phenomena. Therefore, I think these kinds of things have to be put in a category of "non-biblical" and "exotic."

B. However, there have been some revival reports in church tradition where people have made various and sundry "animal noises" (or noises that could be labeled as such, though I doubt making animal sounds was the intent of the people). For instance, at the Cane Ridge Revival in Kentucky during the Second Great Awakening, there were a number of people who did so.

Furthermore, I understand that Charles Finney had some sort of experience where he made a kind of "roaring noise," although I don't think he, in retrospect, equated it with a lion. He did equate it, however, with an anointing from God that transformed his ministry.

C. I've had, to date, seven or eight testimonies from people who have "roared." Here are the conclusions they drew from the experience:

1. There was a sense of God's indignation at the state of the church and the impact of the enemy's presence in the church. As a consequence, people responded with a "prophetic roar," which was sort of an "announcement" that God's intention was to take back territory.
2. Furthermore, it seemed to affirm the issue of the Lord's authority in their lives and ministries, and as a consequence they've been very excited about the potential for more powerful ministry in the future.

3. It seems to me that nearly all of them have equated this with some sort of prophetic experience, either personal anointing for prophecy and/or prophetic in the sense that God is saying to the church, "Rise up, and take back the land/people/things that the enemy has one way or another wrongfully usurped control of.

D. However, having said that, I must point out that there is some disagreement in our circles here in the Vineyard.

1. There are those that are very enthusiastic endorsers of the experience and I think are, as a consequence, even encouraging others in this kind of experience. I strongly feel that it is excessive to do so, in that again I know of no biblical mandate for encouraging anyone to "roar."

However, based on the rubric of "bless what the Father's doing," I suppose, if I were in a ministry context and somebody started "roaring," I would bless what I thought the Father was doing, regardless of the "roaring" or any other manifestation. Keep in mind, however, we do not equate phenomena with God; we see these usually as *human responses* to God. (emphasis in original)

2. On the other hand, there are people who sharply disagree with the notion that anything such as this kind of phenomena could be perceived to be something of God, and would quickly point out that there's no biblical support for equating the experience with God, and I would have to agree that this, indeed, has to be viewed as an exotic and non-biblically endorsed experience.

Having said that, I do not, personally, hold the opinion that this is "demonic" and/or necessarily "divine." I put this in the category of "pondering/I don't know." I am looking for, in the aftermath, the affects (*sic*) of the experience to see how it relates to the person's life. If we see fruit (i.e., Mt. 7:15ff, I Cor. 14, Acts

5:33ff, I Jn. 4:1-3), then I suppose I would accept the notion that, if the people who have had the experience are advancing, perhaps it was something from God.⁶³

Wimber continues by suggesting that, rather than focus on these manifestations, the churches should focus on the "main and the plain things" of Scripture (i.e., "salvation, sanctification, justification by faith and the consequent experiences of such"). He closes his letter with the acknowledgment that "there have been times in the past where we've attempted to cast demons out of people who made 'animal noises.' On some occasions demons manifested and we did cast them out and on other occasions we were puzzled by the lack of deliverance." Thus, he has decided to "review again" his presuppositions on the matter.

Through all the "I supposes," "on the other hands," "having said that," and similar hems-and-haws, it becomes evident that this man who champions the gifts of the Spirit lacks one of the most important gifts of all: discernment.

After several years he still doesn't know if the phenomena are of God or not. Evidently God isn't able to confirm this tremendous move to the leader of the churches most involved in it.

The AVC Board of Directors were no less vacillating. Yet not being able to take a stand on the authenticity of these things, the AVC decided to dissociate from the most visible and central Vineyard church promoting these phenomena, on the basis that its pastor did not comply with the AVC Board's position.

What position? It had no position other than to state, in so many words,

We are willing to allow "experiences" to happen without endorsing, encouraging or stimulating them; nor should we seek to "explain" them by inappropriate "proof-texting." Biblical metaphors (similar to those concerning a lion or a dove, etc.) do not justify or provide a proof-text for animal behavior.⁶⁴

Beyond that, the AVC Board took the same non-committal stance that Wimber took. In fact, they allowed their statement to be subject to the discretion of the local pastors:

The guidelines that follow represent the majority consensus of the board. It is not possible in a brief document to adequately express all the discussion or all

of the minority positions that are held by various board members. It is, therefore, important to remember that this statement is subject to the autonomy of the local church and its pastor. All of this must be worked through in a way that does not violate one's faith or conscience.⁶⁵

Wimber and the AVC are not against what is going on; they just don't think it should be inordinately promoted. This after extolling the virtues of the movement for almost two years. Yet on the basis of such a vacillating, non-committal stance, which even allowed for the discretion of the local pastors, they disenfranchised John Arnott's Toronto Airport Vineyard. And, again, only the Vineyard church most visibly engaged in this move is dissociated.

Something more seems to be afoot here. Is it possible that the popularity of the Promise Keepers movement is at least one reason for the separation?

It's no secret that Vineyard adherents comprise the top leadership of Promise Keepers. This includes founder Bill McCartney, and president Randy Phillips, as well their pastor, James Ryle, who helped found and continues to help guide Promise Keepers. Ryle is pastor of the Boulder Valley, Colorado, Vineyard, and a Vineyard "prophet."

Considering the Vineyard tactic of infiltration as a means to implant its psychic- and psychologically-based philosophy into other churches, the possibility exists that the Vineyard may see more value in Promise Keepers than in the "holy laughter" phenomenon. Any organization even remotely connected with the Vineyard must be distanced from overtly bizarre activities. Yet Promise Keepers will not take a stance on these phenomena one way or the other. Again, space does not allow for a complete treatise on Promise Keepers, but the reader may write for our special report, *Promise Keepers: Is What You See What You Get?*

THE KANSAS CITY CONNECTION

In June, 1982, a man named Augustine claimed to hear the audible voice of God instruct him to tell the young pastor of a small church in St. Louis, Missouri, that by the Spirit of Truth, he would prophesy on the condition of the congregation. That young pastor, Mike Bickle, was impressed by Augustine's seeming accuracy, and he accepted Augustine as one sent by God to give him direction.

According to Augustine, this work was to be centered in Kansas City, Missouri. On December 5, 1982, Kansas City Fellowship held its first service. As strong advocates of the restoration of the apostolic and prophetic ministries, Kansas City Fellowship and its parachurch outreach, Grace Ministries, virtually exploded onto the international Christian scene in the late '80s.

As it turned out, the Kansas City "prophets" were harbingers of a Latter-Rain movement revival and of the aberrant Manifested Sons of God teachings.

In August, 1989, John Wimber invited the Kansas City "prophets" to minister to the Vineyard pastors at a special conference. The prophets taught and laid hands on the pastors to impart their power and special blessing.

Eventually, because of scandals, out-of-control prophetic ministry and other bizarre elements, the Kansas City Fellowship found itself in the midst of a controversy that threatened to bring it to ruin. Under pressure, Mike Bickle asked John Wimber to bring correction, and to cover the KCF ministry with the Vineyard mantle. Thus, Kansas City Fellowship became Metro Christian Vineyard of Kansas City.

Today, Metro Christian Vineyard is considerably subdued, having become a more mainstream Vineyard. Most of its most controversial "apostles" and "prophets" have gone their own way, although one, John Paul Jackson, went to work with John Wimber at the Anaheim Vineyard.

(Our original report, *Latter-Day Prophets*, is out of print. But it has been incorporated into our book, *Vengeance is Ours: The Church in Dominion*.)

WHY NO POWER TODAY?

Throughout his teachings Wimber offers testimony after testimony of healing. Some are remarkable if true, and there is no reason to believe that they are not. But many psychic healers also offer remarkable testimonies of healings from cancer, heart disease, and many seemingly incurable diseases. However, many if not most testimonies from the charismatic camp, as well as from among psychic healers, are the type that are not documentable from a medical standpoint. Some are possibly psychosomatic; many are second-person or even third-person accounts of possible healings from other parts of the world. Others are of the "invisible" type (headaches, stomach pains, undiagnosed internal problems, etc.).

When we compare the miracles of Jesus and the apostles with the methodologies of the Vineyard and other practitioners of supernatural healing, we find many discrepancies. Certainly the rate of success is considerably less for the latter.

So the question arises why God does not seem to heal through the gifts of the Spirit today as He did in biblical times. After all, if Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8), why should things be any different today? Why should it be necessary for a man or a movement to offer healing methodologies gleaned from heretics in order to get God to work?

That God works in different manners throughout history does not negate His power being active today, merely because we don't see the unfailing signs and wonders that were evidence of the apostolic office. The fact that Paul even points to the signs and wonders for evidence of the apostolic office (II Corinthians 12:12) is proof that the apostles did indeed exercise certain God-given gifts that were not available to the average believer.

We also see in the epistles that the churches were fraught with problems and lack of spiritual power even during the first century. Yet there were those who did possess the gift of healing. At the same time, there is no full description of that gift. We can assume, however, that if the Holy Spirit gifted one with the ability to heal, one didn't have to resort to methodologies to accomplish the healing.

The Gifts of the Spirit

God always has performed and always will perform His miracles according to His own purpose and pleasure. The excesses and errors of the Vineyard as well as many within the charismatic and Pentecostal churches merely prove that most of what is transpiring in the name of God's power is really the flesh of man seeking a sign to validate the truth of God's Word. But that does not negate the reality of God's power, contrary to those who insist that God has done away with the gifts of the Spirit.

With all the disputes today between those who deny that the gifts of the Spirit are still operable, and those who insist that they are still operable in the same manner as in the first-century Church, it would be helpful to review the gifts of the Spirit, and see just how they might or might not apply today.

Apart from Romans 12 and I Corinthians 4 and 14, there is little said about

the gifts of the Holy Spirit in Scripture. The gift of ministry in Romans 12:7 encompasses several gifts which are more detailed in I Corinthians 12. The rest of the gifts are enumerated thusly:

- prophecy;
- teaching;
- exhortation;
- giving;
- ruling;
- mercy;
- the word of wisdom;
- the word of knowledge;
- faith;
- healing;
- miracles;
- discerning of spirits;
- diverse languages (tongues);
- interpretation of tongues;
- helps;
- government;
- edification;
- comfort.

Essentially, the gifts of the Spirit are given primarily for the edification of the Church, not for evangelism.

This does not negate the fact that God might occasionally use the gifts to convict and convince those He has chosen for salvation. But first and foremost, the gifts are for "power edification," not "power evangelism."

It is said by some that the gifts of the Spirit ended with the death of the last original apostle, and that after the Scriptures were written, the gifts were no longer necessary. I Corinthians 13:8-10 is cited as a proof text:

Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

It's true that apostleship was a gift of government which, in order to validate the office, enjoyed the more remarkable supernatural gifts of miracles, healing, signs and wonders:

Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds. (II Corinthians 12:12)

It's also true that the full combination of all the gifts were given exclusively to the first-century apostles whose function was to define the faith and provide us with the written instructions—the New Testament—for the Church. Those who say that the gifts of the Spirit are no longer valid because they ended with the death of the apostles neglect an important point. If the Church needed the gifts of the Spirit for edification in those days, even while the apostles were among them, how much more do we need them today?

When I Corinthians 13:8-10 is placed in context with verses 11-13, we see that "that which is perfect" is the perfection of the saints after the resurrection:

When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

True, the Bible is all that is necessary for instruction in righteousness, and in learning doctrine and practice. But its completion did not negate the need for the gifts of the Spirit. In fact, it guides us in discerning the true giftings of God from the counterfeits of the flesh and the devil. And we still need government; we still need helps; we still need exhortation and comfort; and we surely need mercy. The only gifts that are rejected out of hand by some today are the "supernatural" gifts: tongues, miracles, healings, etc.

There are two reasons for this: The first reason is that, obviously, the gifts of the Spirit are not in evidence to the degree described in Scripture. The second reason is the fleshly attempt by many to duplicate what they wish God were doing among them. Not to mention the scandals that have attended these attempts.

It is understandable that people would react adversely to the idea that the gifts of the Spirit are valid for today when most of what they witness in the name of the Holy Spirit is radical, out-of-control and even demonic behavior.

But they are missing something important. By claiming that they rely only on Scripture and do not need the gifts of the Spirit, they are, in effect, rejecting Scripture's teaching on the gifts of the

Spirit. They are basing their belief not on Scripture, but on evidence—the “evidence” that the gifts of the Spirit are not in operation today. In other words, regardless of what Scripture says about the need of the gifts for the edification of the Church, and lacking any definitive Scripture to back up the claim that the gifts of the Spirit are not valid for today, they judge the gifts no longer operable. This, too, is pragmatism of a sort.

Yet there is a reason besides unbelief why there are few miracles in our midst. God is not dispensing the gifts of the Spirit in the same way He did in the first century.

If this seems contradictory to what I've stated previously, let me explain. There is a difference between what God *is doing* and what God *can and/or will do*. If He is not dispensing the gifts today it is for a specific purpose. But this is not to say that He will not again dispense the gifts tomorrow when His purpose allows for it.

So the question remains why God is not dispensing the gifts of the Spirit today to the same degree He did in the past (or may do again in the future).

One reason is that the churches are not the haven for believers that they are meant to be. They have become a haven for unbelievers masquerading as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. They have become a haven for demons, not having thrown off the unclean things inherited from Babylon. Many of these exercise counterfeit gifts.

Paul warned that, even in his day, the mystery of iniquity was already at work (II Thessalonians 2:7). The epistles demonstrate how the churches were already being infiltrated by deceivers, false apostles, false prophets, false brethren. The resulting hierarchical structure that created an exalted priesthood class has remained to this day. The Reformation brought the light of God's Word to the people, but the overwhelming response of the churches has been to manipulate His Word to suit their own peculiar theologies.

As a whole we have not come out from among the evil in our churches as commanded in II Corinthians 6:14. On the contrary, we have invited the evil in by giving audience to the heresies of unbelievers professing to be Christians.

The lifestyle and values of the world inundate the churches. Add to this the false doctrines, the traditions of the denominations or the seminaries in which the pastors are educated, the

prideful maintenance of the “clergy-laity” mentality among the leadership, and it is no wonder that God is not abundantly bestowing His gifts upon His children.

We are disobedient, prideful, worldly-wise children who expect our father to give us everything we want simply because we are “King's kids.”

While there are numbers of true disciples, pastors and teachers within the various churches, many have failed to heed the Lord's command to separate from the unclean thing. They continue to tolerate unscriptural teachings and practices. Those that are vexed by the encroachment of unbiblical and extra-biblical teachings and practices eventually find themselves ostracized by the leadership and/or the congregation because they create waves by insisting upon purity of doctrine and ministry in love instead of expedience or favoritism.

Will God bless with supernatural gifts a Church that doesn't even implement the natural gifts of mercy, comfort and exhortation to biblical righteousness—that neglects its true widows and the needy in its ministrations while building grandiose structures that drain the congregation of its financial resources?

The churches have not been faithful in the little things—the non-supernatural gifts (i.e., mercy, proper government, pure, biblical teaching, giving, just rulership, edification, exhortation to true holiness, comfort for the afflicted). Where these are in evidence on occasion, they are often given according to expediency—if it doesn't take too much sacrifice. How can the Church expect God to give it the “greater” gifts borne of the supernatural?

The natural gifts result from obedience to the law of love. Paul makes it clear in I Corinthians 12:31 and the whole of chapter 13 that love is greater than the greatest gift of the Spirit. Love is the basis for the fruit of the Spirit and is the first named among its qualities:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. (Gal 5:22-23)

It is the fruit of the Spirit that must precede the gifts of the Spirit. For any ministry entered into on any basis other than love and the calling of God is bound to result in failure where the gifts of the Spirit are concerned.

I believe the reason we in the United States, especially, are not seeing more of God's genuine power is that we don't “need” it. We have all we need (i.e., we *think* we have all we need), and Wimber's assessment of Western materialism is correct in that regard. But the time will come when God's people will be forced to rely upon Him for our sustenance. When we are driven into the wilderness, unable to buy or sell, unable to receive medical help, God will once again be the provider of all our needs.

Admittedly, our flesh does not look forward to such a day, yet we long for it within our hearts.

Jesus promised that He would present to Himself a Church without spot or wrinkle (Ephesians 5:27). This doesn't mean that every individual will be sinless, as is erroneously taught by some of today's false apostles and prophets of the Manifested Sons of God ilk. Rather, it will be a Church that has come out from among the false apostles, the false prophets, the false brethren, and has truly washed its robes in the blood of the Lamb.

The spots are false brethren and, more specifically, false teachers (II Peter 2:1-22; Jude 3-23).

Jude 3 exhorts us to earnestly contend for the faith for the simple reason that it has been under attack by false teachers in every age. What we are undergoing today is not new; it began with the first-century churches. Jesus warned that it would increase toward the end:

For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. (Matthew 24:24)

Yet to hear virtually every major teacher in the Church today, there are no false teachers except those who call out the false teachers and staunchly insist on a defense of the Faith—the so-called “heretic hunters.”

Why are few leaders of any real magnitude warning the brethren about false teachers? Because most *are* the false teachers. They are compromising with the Vatican to lead all of Christendom back under the papal umbrella. And the central force for that unity is not the true Gospel; it is false “love” combined with false doctrine and lying signs and wonders—seeming miracles of God—implemented through occult methodologies.

All this points to the approaching end of the age and the Lord's return:

And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:

That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. (II Thessalonians 2:11-12)

It is God who is sending this strong delusion for the testing of men's hearts. It may seem incredible, but it's very possible that many genuine healings and miracles from God are occurring among the false teachers. The reasons may be varied: mercy upon the afflicted in spite of the error; God's desire to strengthen the deception as appearing true in the eyes of the masses who have rejected His truth; God's short-term and/or long-term plans for redemption.

Only God knows fully the reason for allowing the deception, or for how the deception will be played out. Our responsibility is to avoid the deception by placing a higher priority upon God's Word than upon physical evidence, anecdotes and experiences.

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (II Tim. 2:15)

And this is another reason why the gifts of the Spirit are not in evidence to the degree desired by so many: they do not study to show themselves approved by God. One who is not approved by God cannot expect God to meet his approval; he cannot demand that God meet his conditions for power encounters.

CONCLUSION

In spite of Wimber's emphasis on healing, he has undergone some difficult times with his own health. This, in itself, is not evidence that his philosophy is faulty. Many true men of God have suffered in their bodies.

At the time of this writing, Wimber's cancer appears to be at least in remission, and possibly cured. This has been effected, he says, by medical means; he underwent difficult radiation treatment over a long period of time.

It is incumbent upon we who may be considered Wimber's detractors not to judge the man or his teachings on the basis that he has not been healed exclusively through divine intervention.

Yet our sympathy for his physical infirmities cannot cloud our judgment on the issues surrounding his extra-biblical and unbiblical teachings and prac-

tices. Nor can we remain unconcerned about his ecumenical position, which is a great deception. It remains our hope that he will recognize those areas in which he has erred, and will repent.

As for the many testimonies of healings and miracles that Wimber and his disciples report, we caution our readers not to make judgments in their favor merely on the basis of their credibility or remarkable nature. Wimber himself would say that wherever God is at work, so is Satan and the flesh. His weakness lies in not being able to discern which is which—being too willing to not judge where judgment is needed.

If, indeed, God is at work in some of the healings in the Vineyard movement, there are reasons why He would lend credibility to the erroneous movement itself. Not all Vineyard pastors accept the bizarre and/or unscriptural methodologies. And God is still testing men's hearts to find those who will adhere to His truth regardless of what they see with their eyes or experience in their bodies.

If we can but be content with what God does in and through us within the boundaries of His Word, and not chase after signs and wonders for their own sake, we can rest assured that all we need will be given to us. We should not desire more than He has promised. Nor should we seek to make happen what He has not ordained for the moment. Ω

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TESTING THE FRUIT OF THE VINEYARD



By John Goodwin

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Because Scripture clearly states that in the last days many false prophets will arise and that a spiritual deception would precede the return of Christ for His Church, it is imperative that Christians be warned and made aware of heresies.

For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. (Matthew 24:24)

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. (1 John 4:1)

By definition, heresy is that which deviates from the original doctrines or theology in any given religion. The primary indicators of heresy in Vineyard teachings are a departure from Scripture and a willingness to go beyond the Word of God for spiritual truth. These characteristics are the product of Vineyard apostle John Wimber.

The extensive outreach of the Vineyard mandates that their teachings be examined in the context and light of Scripture, especially by those who have been exposed to their teachings.

Many of Wimber's teachings have stirred controversy within the churches for more than a decade. He continues to promote a number of damaging concepts infiltrating Christian circles, chiefly the idea that supernatural experiences need no biblical basis for acceptance.

GOING BEYOND SCRIPTURE

Wimber commonly states that "God is greater than His word." This phrase has become his mantra, and is used repeatedly on tapes, and live at seminars and conferences. It means two things: first, there is spiritual truth in extra-biblical sources (i.e., he denies the sufficiency of Scripture for the believer's life); and secondly, the phenomena experienced at Vineyard seminars and services do not need to be validated by Scripture. They could contra-

dict God's Word and still be "from the Lord."¹ He also notes, "God is giving us special, prescriptive directions from week to week."² In regard to prophesying he says, "I'm speaking things into existence that God is telling me to speak, because of the anointing. We're moving into a miracle dimension."³

Only the Word of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, spoke things into existence by divine fiat.

And what are these "special, prescriptive directions"? The Bible tells us, "Forever, O Lord, Thy Word is settled in heaven" (Psalm 119:89)—not from "week to week." Nowhere are we told to speak things into existence or move into other dimensions.

Such self-aggrandizing and self-adulating concepts are especially dangerous when we consider that John Wimber has made a primary departure from the faith in his teaching regarding Scripture and experience:

All that is in the Bible is true, but not all truth is in the Bible. We integrate all truth, both biblical and other, into our experience of living.⁴

John Wimber has advocated that all Vineyards incorporate this belief into a comprehensive statement of faith. As a result, his teaching is largely founded on spiritual experiences which are not always validated by Scripture.

This experiential approach to God is not in line with the manner in which God has instructed us to come to Him. It is consistent with, and opens the participant up to, the occult. Such practices are not just a bad idea—they are dangerous because the spiritual realm contacted by those using them is real. Christians must heed the clear warning of Scripture to not only have nothing to do with such unfruitful works of darkness, but expose them (Ephesians 5:11).

Jesus said in John 14:23, "If a man love me, he will keep my words." The violation of His words by church leaders can only be interpreted as the converse of this declaration (i.e., those in violation do not love Jesus). The Lord defines those who are His disciples:

Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed. (John 8:31)

What God has revealed in His Word is so important that only by continuing in the Word are we a disciple of Jesus Christ. Only by continuing in the Word can we enter at the strait gate, and proceed down the narrow way that leads to life everlasting.

The idea that phenomena do not need scriptural warrant, and could contradict Scripture and still be "from the Lord," is based on the idea that the experiences are self-authenticating (i.e., the experiences must be from God because they are supernatural and I, a Christian, am having them.) This attitude allows anyone to become the final arbiter of whether or not something is from God.

It is a sound principle of Christian faith that every philosophy, every doctrine, every methodology be tested by the Word of God. In discussing the charismatic movement in general, pastor and author Chuck Smith observes,

One of the greatest weaknesses of the charismatic movement is its lack of sound Bible teaching. There seems to be an undue preoccupation with experience, which is often placed above the Word. As a consequence, charismatics have become fertile field for strange and unscriptural doctrines proliferating through their ranks.⁵

John Wimber makes his attitude towards strong biblical identification clear when he compares his approach to Scripture with that of Calvary Chapel:

Calvaryites [those who attend Calvary Chapel] are sometimes a little too heavily orientated to the written word. I know that sounds a little dangerous, but frankly they're very Pharisaical in their allegiance to the Bible. They have very little life, and growth and spontaneity in their innards. Sometimes they're very rigid and can't receive much of the things of the Lord.⁶

Whatever these "things of the Lord" are to which Wimber is referring, it is questionable that they are of the Lord if they cannot be found by people attentive to His Word and open to being led by the power of the Holy Spirit.

And to equate with unbelieving Pharisees those who insist that teaching and practice be both orthodox and orthoprax is to beg the question. It is a spurious argument that deflects attention from his own lack of accountability to Scripture.

This attitude towards extra-biblical experience is taken further when Wimber states, "Because they believe the right doctrine and can give you the right answer doesn't mean they're born again."⁷

This is true, in and of itself. But it doesn't mean too much when combined with Wimber's continued ridicule of those who rely on the Word of God for final authority. The implication is that knowledge of the Word is suspect as evidence of life in Christ.

On studying the Bible, Wimber says, "It's not a worthy goal just to get through the Bible. It's not a worthy goal just to be informed by the Bible."⁸

Technically, this is true, also. We must put into practice what we learn; it isn't enough just to know the truth. But, again, when coupled with Wimber's insistence that practice need not be authenticated by the Bible, he is effectively putting himself and his followers beyond the pale of biblical faith, and making themselves a law unto themselves. For the Vineyard, just because a spiritual experience is not biblical (i.e., found in and derived from Scripture), doesn't mean it's not from God. As with all arguments in favor of self-authentication, this also leaves anyone having a spiritual experience as their own authority.

Wimber says that external proofs and miracles validate Scripture. But the truth is that Scripture authenticates the experiences or the "signs and wonders." If certain practices are at variance with any portion of Scripture, or are not found in Scripture, we must conclude that they are satanic or lying signs and wonders, especially when combined with bad doctrine.

A LOW VIEW OF SCRIPTURE

Jesus said, "The words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit and they are life" (John 6:63b). The writer of Hebrews tells us,

The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)

Because Jesus Christ is the Living Word, a true devotee of Jesus Christ will be at the same time devoted to His Word. There is no logical or spiritual separation.

Wimber rationalizes his position on Scripture by agreeing with the accusation of the scribes that Jesus is a blasphemer, and placing himself on an equal level with Christ in authority. Speaking on Luke 5:18-24, Wimber says, "This fellow blasphemes—were they correct? Yes, they were correct."⁹ He elaborates by stating that,

Many of you, and myself included, have committed that sin. We have been theologically correct as we've attempted to conform something to Scripture, saying, "at this point the teaching is." Many fundamentalists do exactly the same thing today about the works of the Spirit. They take the Word of God and chisel at a practice or a ministry or a flow, without recognizing it's God moving—not recognizing that God is bigger than His written Word."¹⁰

There are several things going on here. To begin with, if a practice is scripturally correct, one would not need to conform it to Scripture. Any need for such contortion indicates a problem in itself. An example would be the statement, "They take the Word of God and chisel at a practice or a ministry or a flow." If a practice or ministry is from the Lord then the Word of God won't "chisel" at it but will affirm and ratify it. Secondly, where in Scripture do you find anything about "a flow"? Here again we find an incursion of New Age thought in Wimber's teaching.

Wimber accomplishes two things through this kind of thinking. First, he identifies himself with Jesus in the Luke 5:18-24 scenario, imputing to himself and his followers the authority of Jesus Christ on scriptural issues and practice. Second, he equates with the unbelieving scribes those who measure a practice or ministry by Scripture. This effectively insulates his teaching and practice from scriptural critique. He is equating non-recognition of his ministry with non-recognition of the person and ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Wimber elaborates on Luke 5:18-24:

In this case, He [Jesus], by revelation of the Spirit, knew exactly what these guys were thinking. Jesus, knowing their hearts, said, "Why are you think-

ing evil in your heart?" I remember when the Lord spoke that word to my heart, it was like an arrow in my heart. I said, "Lord, they're not thinking evil, they're just operating under sound doctrine." Hello! "These men aren't thinking evil; these men were under doctrine; they were under a dispensation; they were under the Old Testament; they're not being evil, Lord." But you see, it's evil when you don't recognize God. It's evil when you don't see Jesus in the things that are going on. It's evil when you hide behind doctrinal beliefs that curtail and control the work of the Spirit. It's evil when you don't recognize the Lord of glory in the work He's doing. The Church today is committing evil in the name of sound doctrine. And they are quenching the work of the Holy Spirit. And they're turning against the work of the Holy Spirit. And they're resisting the work of the Holy Spirit in this last day."¹¹

Wimber is himself hiding behind a facade of appearing to adhere to the moving of God's Spirit in order to insulate his theology and practices from those who would unravel the facade with God's Word. None of this addresses the real issue: whether these practices and ideas are biblical. Wimber sets this up by stating that Jesus knew, "by revelation of the Spirit" (implying a low regard for the full divinity of Jesus Christ), and by professing the belief in his own ministry's equality with the ministry of Jesus.

Sound doctrine will not "curtail and control" the work of the Holy Spirit, but will encourage that work and produce godliness (I Timothy 6:2-3). To quench the work of the Holy Spirit is to not walk in love. To teach doctrines not found in Scripture, and to invite confusion and demonic activity, is to truly quench the work of the Holy Spirit. But Wimber says,

Sometimes you can learn more from what's not said than from what's said. If you take today's practice and put it up against the Scripture, lots of stuff falls off. There's no place to put it."¹²

Certainly no biblical practice "falls off" when you "put it up against the Scripture." As for what is unbiblical, the best place to put it is out of the Church. The implication of Wimber's statement

is that experiences can be self-authenticating, needing no scriptural support. It also indicates that Wimber and the Vineyard churches believe God is speaking to us by what He doesn't say, or what they say He meant by what He didn't say in His Word. Please don't miss this point. Wimber's statements are subtle, but the reality is to get you to accept his interpretation as a continual revelation from God to the Church, and the need for the churches, either directly, or indirectly, to come under the authority of Vineyard doctrine.

THE NEW AUTHORITY

The Vineyard leadership present themselves as gurus to the Church—a Church that they believe is unable to know the truth and understand the times by the Word and Spirit of God. They believe the Church is in need of intense and constant clarification by the Vineyard leadership of what God is saying to us by what He didn't say in His Word.

This challenge to God's Word accomplishes three very important things for Satan. The first tactic of Satan is the challenge in Genesis three. Here we find where Satan asks Eve the question, "hath God said?" Another way of putting that question is, "are you sure you understand what God has said to you?" Or, "Sometimes you can learn more from what God is not saying than from what He is saying." This tactic plants the seed of doubt about the authority of God and His Word.

The second challenge is, "You shall not surely die." This is a full frontal assault on God's Word, implying that God didn't mean what He said. In effect, Wimber says "What God really meant is not what He said, but what we say He meant."

The third lie is, "You shall be as God." You can speak things into existence. You can move into other dimensions. You can edit or rewrite Scripture and it's alright with God. Never mind that God said to us,

If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. (Revelation 22:18b-19:)

Make no mistake about it, God's Word is true and shall be fulfilled. Also

make no mistake that what Wimber is doing is moving the Church into the New Age and the New World Order. With this statement from Satan, urging Eve to make a "paradigm shift,"—to become like God—comes the spirit of antiChrist.

The attack by the enemies of God's Word is also three-pronged. They question God's Word; they deny God's Word; they substitute a lie as the truth. The spirit of antiChrist is not a duplicate of Christ; it is the reversal of Christ. AntiChrist takes the words of Christ and reverses their meaning; he calls good evil, and evil good. The three pronged attack is: 1) The Bible has been misinterpreted; 2) the traditional position of Scripture is denied; 3) the reversal of Scripture becomes the "truth."

There are a multiplicity of problems that develop in each of these areas, all of which relate at some point to deviation from the Scriptures. John Wimber reveals his attitude towards Scripture, and his basic extra-biblical thinking on a variety of subjects. His confusion, which results from a departure from the written Word, leads to chaos in theology and practice.

THE PARADIGM SHIFT

Wimber repeatedly criticizes what he calls the "Western worldview" which is rational and demands logical answers.

According to Wimber, in order for us to fully appreciate what God is doing in the world, we must experience what he calls a "paradigm shift" from a Western way of thinking to an Eastern way of looking at things. He says:

We must remember always that the Bible was written in the Middle East—not with a rational assumption that we bring to it as we try to understand it—but with an 'experiential' assumption.¹³

Such a statement implies that God didn't address (or didn't know how to address) all of mankind in His Word. It assumes that men were the authors of Scripture rather than the Holy Spirit.

The paradigm shift is explained by Wimber in his seminar on *Signs and Wonders and Church Growth* in what he calls a "logic syllogism." Presuming that people in the Far East have an "experiential" mind-set, he describes an exchange of logic with an imaginary Far Easterner:

You tell someone from the Far or Middle East that cotton only grows in warm, semi-arid

climates. England is cold and wet. [Ask them] "Does cotton grow in England?" The answer you'll get is, "I don't know, I haven't been to England."¹⁴

In other words, a person with such a mind-set will not accept facts at face value, but must "experience" them to know the truth. It would be dangerous for Christians to be seduced into thinking they must experience a paradigm shift to Eastern thought in order to experience the fullness of the Holy Spirit or to better understand God's Word, rather than taking Scripture at face value. That one must experience in order to know is existentialism; it is not biblical doctrine. It's the old, "I think, therefore, I am" game of mental gymnastics. In reality the truth is, "I am made in the image of God; therefore, I think."

John Wimber's teachings about "paradigm shifts" and "worldviews" are very similar to those in the New Age movement, which seeks to draw people into Eastern mysticism. New Age philosophy also attacks Christianity as being a product of Western "rationalism" and "scientism" in its attempts to shift people's thinking away from rational thought to the non-rational base associated with Eastern religions. Wimber's philosophy is comparable in most ways to the blind leap of faith into a non-reasoned religious experience of existentialism. True Christianity never includes the demand for a non-reasoned blind leap of faith. Paul said, "I know whom I have believed in." The concept of a non-reasoned belief system originated with the Babylonian mystery religions.

When a person places his/her experience in "hearing from the Lord" above Scripture, all manner of misinformation enters in. Examples include statements like this by John Wimber:

The Lord spoke to me and said to me, "Just as I had need of the colt and the donkey for my entry into Jerusalem, I need my Church back for my re-entry. Go to the Church." He gave me the impression that this was the message from now on: "the Lord hath need of it, the Lord wants His church back."¹⁵

What Wimber is alluding to here is that the Lord's return for His Church is predicated upon the perfection of the Church. This doctrine is not only refuted by Scripture, but actually originated in the Manifested Son's of God heresy. It was perpetuated through Ag-

nes Sanford, who first introduced inner healing and other unbiblical, metaphysical practices into the Church.

While describing one of his healing seminars in England to an Anglican bishop, Wimber says he told him, "The Lord gave me a message the last night to share in York, out of I Corinthians 14:40: 'Let all things be done properly and in an orderly manner.' I told him [the bishop] that this week the Lord had said, 'let all things be done.'"¹⁶

How was the Lord giving this message to him, especially since it directly contradicts His Word? Wimber is simply equating his own thoughts with God's voice and rewriting Scripture in the process.

IF IT WORKS, IT MUST BE FROM GOD

In a Christian Life publication entitled *Signs and Wonders Today*, John Wimber describes some of the "theological changes" he has experienced. He relates that a "fierce pragmatism" or an ends-justifies-the-means approach directs not only his theology, but his entire ministry.¹⁷ According to theologian R.C. Sproul,

Pragmatism may be defined simply as the approach to reality that defines truth as "that which works." The pragmatist is concerned about results and the results determine the truth. The pragmatist, then, is not so much concerned about what the Bible says about a "practice" as he is about whether or not it works. The person who despises theory and calls himself practical is not wise.¹⁸

Sproul calls such a person a "sensuous Christian." The sensuous Christian doesn't need to study the Word of God because he already knows the will of God by his feelings. He doesn't want to *know* God; he wants to *experience* Him. The sensuous Christian equates child-like faith with ignorance. Says Sproul,

A sensuous Christian believes in the equality of all ideas and will give equal weight to the Word of God and the opinions of rock stars.¹⁹

As a result of this kind of thinking, Wimber believes he can get accurate information either from the Word of God, or from a demon. This is evidenced by the credence he gives to things spoken by demons, whom he says told him:

There are many demons that don't have a body. Having a

body [for a demon] is like having a car. They want to have a car so they can get around.²⁰

He also states that demons have told him they are limited to certain geographical locations and are unable to pass beyond those invisible boundaries.²¹

This would seem to fall into the category that Paul spoke of, "giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of demons" (I Timothy 4:1). If, in fact, Wimber was in contact with demons, it doesn't seem to have occurred to him that a demon might not be telling the truth. This naive acceptance of information gleaned from conversations with demons is very alarming and dangerous. If equal credence is given to a demon and the Word of God, then we must ask where the basis for right and wrong, good or evil, come from in Wimber's mind. We see in addition to his pragmatism a nihilism that is pervading his thinking, producing a relativism that allows for literally anything in a given context to be true or real.

Because of this equal credence, F.V. Scott says:

John Wimber has fallen victim to a subjective mind-set leading to the assumption that if a "healing technique" works, it must be of God, or that if a psychological theory seems to bring healing, it can be safely incorporated into the historic doctrines of the Christian Church.²²

Once again, this can result in the equation of one's own thoughts with God's voice. Experience becomes as valid as the Word of God as the measure of truth, and one's own thoughts become "anointed" to the point of infallibility. Accordingly, to Wimber and the Vineyard Fellowships the only authentication required for an experience or thought to be the product of the Holy Spirit, is for you to have had it.

Don't miss this point. Men become the final arbitrators of truth—oracles of God, equal in merit and authority with the Word of God. This is extremely dangerous to anyone who embraces the concept that their lives are so anointed that *any* and *every* thought they have is a product of divine inspiration.

POWER EVANGELISM

Fierce pragmatism has also led to the adoption of "power evangelism," a method of evangelism that places primary emphasis upon signs and wonders to provide a witness of God's power in the world today. The concept

of power evangelism, which originated in 1982 with John Wimber, Blaine Cook, and Lonnie Frisbee in the Vineyard, is based on the idea that signs and wonders are the most effective means for evangelism.

To demonstrate this, Wimber says, "Once you've healed a person, it's very easy to lead them to Christ."²³ If this were true, why were there only 120 in the upper room after the crucifixion? Jesus and the twelve—and later the seventy—healed hundreds, perhaps thousands. By Wimber's reasoning those healed should have been saved. But the record of Acts tells us that "the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 4:47). And their addition was the result of the preaching of the Gospel, not the result of having been healed. The number added in the New Testament through anyone's healing ministry is only a handful.

Wimber makes his case for "power evangelism" from questionable statistics and from speculation. There is a great preoccupation within the Vineyards on the "power ministry," and being able to "call down the power of God" on the congregation or community.

In contrast to "power evangelism" to authenticate the Gospel, Jesus said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). The true and lasting power of the Holy Spirit in evangelism is the personal love of Jesus Christ flowing from His true disciples into the life of the people we touch with the Gospel.

Power evangelism, power healing, power encounters, and similar preoccupations with power indicate a heavy dependence upon experience to validate the spiritual, and are classic signs of a cult. Contrary to this, while Jesus healed and worked miracles, His primary emphasis was on the proclamation of the good news, with or without the miraculous.

F.V. Scott says,

To Wimber, it is essential that the Church grasp the need for signs and wonders in sharing the Gospel with the lost. This strong emphasis on the miraculous, stressing that God is peculiarly present in supernatural, as distinct from natural healing, borders on unbiblical dualism, which separates the natural from the supernatural.²⁴

Wimber says in his Healing Seminar syllabus,

It is important to know the basic dualistic framework of the Bible—to have a right understanding of what it is saying.²⁵

Wimber has gone beyond merely bordering on unbiblical dualism, and is endorsing the concept. F.V. Scott states further,

It is of utmost importance to understand that though the power of Christ is sometimes demonstrated in victorious public confrontation with Satan, the gospel is more than a disclosure of magic that matches and outdoes the magic of folk religions and cults. Its agenda includes more than instant relief from the pains of life. Yet, that is the emphasis of John Wimber's ministry. When the charismatic is pushed to the front of Christian experience, the ethical tends to take a back seat. The ultimate goal of the Christian life is the fruit, not the gifts, of the Spirit.²⁶

HAVE EXPERIENCE - WILL TRAVEL

Wimber has said, "I'm sort of a have-experience-will-travel person."²⁷ He notes that members of his congregation are encouraging one another to move deeply into the "spiritually unknown," as well as to rediscover the "spiritually forgotten."

The "spiritually unknown," is what Wimber calls the "excluded middle," a layer of "reality" which, he says, is not part of the Western world view. In his Signs and Wonders and Church Growth Syllabus, the "excluded middle" is described by the following:

Supernatural Forces On This

Earth:

includes

spirits, ghosts, ancestors, demons

earthly gods and goddesses who live within trees, rivers, hills, villages

supernatural forces: maya, planetary influences, evil eyes, power of magic, sorcery, witchcraft—Holy Spirit, angels, demons, Signs and Wonders, gifts of the Spirit.²⁸

Christians already have in their world view from Scripture the Holy Spirit, gifts of the Spirit, angels, Satan and demons. The rest are mythical, based on superstitions that are rooted in the demonic in the first place. What more needs to be said of them?

Scripture makes us aware of the reality of demons without "paradigm shifts" or "altered world views." It also gives strong warning to have nothing to do with them. There can be no purpose in suggesting that Christians need to incorporate these things into their allegedly "limited" world view. The only purpose is to open them up to experience for the sake of experience, or to gain control as "guides" through this foreign and dangerous territory. Anyone who has been regenerated by the Spirit of God knows about these things, and knows that they are from Satan's realm. We are prohibited by Scripture from pursuing these things.

There is serious danger in exploring the "spiritually unknown" under the guise of gaining understanding from a shift in one's world view. If an experience is not referenced in the Bible Christians cannot reliably trace it to God. This leads to exposure to ungodly and occult influences. Those things which are "forgotten" are in the realm of witchcraft. There are profound scriptural warnings not to remember them or to be "a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer" (Deuteronomy 18:11). God's attitude toward those who delve into these areas is clear:

And the soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits, and after wizards, to go a whoring after them, I will even set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people.

Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the LORD your God. (Leviticus 20:6-7)

Those "spiritually unknown" things take us back to the esoteric mysteries of the occult. For this reason Israel was told not to have anything at all to do with the "abominations" in the land.

By searching out the unknown and the forgotten, Wimber also says, we can "know more personally the God who exists both beyond and within the boundaries of well-defined doctrinal systems."²⁹

The totality of God is certainly beyond our capacity to know and understand, and for this reason, He has defined Himself for us through a specific doctrinal system, and has equated Himself with that system. How are people to know the God who exists beyond that system? We are told by God not to look for Him outside of that system.

Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ,

hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.

If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed:

For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds. (II John 1:9-11)

Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee. (I Timothy 4:16)

If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness;

He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmising,

Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself. (I Timothy 6:3-5)

For a bishop must be blameless...Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. (Titus 1:7-9)

But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine. (Titus 2:1)

GOD OR MAGIC?

Deviation from the Word of God, and the use of extra-biblical sources of teaching, have led John Wimber and the Vineyard into many New Age/occultic, shamanistic beliefs and activities, such as inner healing, aura reading and manipulation, astral projection (i.e., out of body experiences), and contact with familiar spirits. As John Wimber has said, "I can go through the exercise of informing myself, but only God can make the magic."³⁰

As John Wimber sees it, Jesus trained His disciples in the methodologies of signs and wonders, just as a journeyman would train an apprentice to lay bricks. He maintains that those who understand the healing power of God can also train others to perform the same acts. In his instructional tapes on healing, Wimber says, "The apostles had to learn to heal."³¹

There is not one shred of biblical evidence that anyone was ever taught to heal. This is an example of teaching from what the Word doesn't say. This also forms the philosophical basis for all of Wimber's expensive and frequent seminars. This means, in essence, that for a price, you can be taught to perform all acts of healing, deliverance, the miraculous, or the operation of any and all gifts of the Holy Spirit. If Wimber's healing methodologies were led by the Holy Spirit, it seems reasonable to expect that the Holy Spirit would impress upon him to offer them to others without charge:

Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give. (Matthew 10:8)

Despite the fact that there is no reference in Scripture to any healing methodologies, but only to prayer, fasting, and the authority of God, Wimber has attempted to define the nebulous with a Healing Syllabus describing techniques which teach people how to cast out demons and heal the sick. This takes the sovereign work of God and reduces it to an application of techniques. An implicit danger in this is the idea that we can somehow manipulate God through what we do—an occult concept.

In connection with his teaching on the gifts of the Spirit and healing, John Wimber has instructed people to observe physical phenomena which supposedly indicate that healing is taking place. These manifestations are nowhere indicated in Scripture as signs of the presence or power of God, but are purely experiential observations by Wimber.

Instructing people to look for physical changes rather than placing their faith in God, dangerously misdirects attention from having faith in God to having faith in phenomenological manifestations.

A summary of manifestations that Wimber instructs people to look for in those being healed includes:

...hot flushes and stiffness in certain parts of the body, tingling sensations, trembling and shaking, falling down under the power of the Spirit, strong electrical current, ripples on the skin, movement under the skin, radiance on the face (aura reading), heavy breathing, moaning and groaning and being in a trance.³²

In addition, Wimber instructs that,

The phenomenon [*sic*] on the person ministering healing include: sensations of warmth (flowing out of hands) [aura manipulation], tingling feeling, trembling of hands, and a sense of anointing.³³

It would be interesting to have a definition of just what a "sense of anointing" is. On one of his healing videos, Wimber noted the manifestation of these phenomena and exclaimed,

Hot dog, there's tingling and heat going on! That usually means there's healing.³⁴

He has also stated,

These spiritual phenomena are manifestations of the Spirit's presence on the person. By observing them you can begin to see what the Spirit is doing in and through the person. We do not have an explanation for all the various manifestations.³⁵

Such manifestations are more readily observable in witchcraft, voodoo, the occult, and Eastern mysticism. Wimber states in his Healing Syllabus,

Sometimes there are special anointings and whatever you do works!³⁶

In one of his videos on healing, Wimber says,

At the same time I'm gathering information with my five senses I'm also sending up my antenna into the cosmic reality.³⁷

If that's not a totally New Age concept, I don't know what is. If we don't have a scriptural explanation for a manifestation, it's best that we avoid it, since those manifestations that are from the Holy Spirit are revealed in Scripture. These various manifestations within what Wimber calls the "cosmic reality" are revealed to him through the early experiences that he had while Lonnie Frisbee was associated with him. As Wimber saw these things happen he began to draw conclusions based on his pragmatic understanding, as well as on the input of C. Peter Wagner and others at Fuller's School of World Missions.

Speaking on Luke 4:40-41, Wimber says,

See the crowd dynamics? They brought people to him, they brought people to him, they brought people to him, they

brought people to him. What's happening on Sunday night at our church? They're bringing people, they're bringing people, they're bringing people. This wasn't a neat crowd. There were probably people flipping and flopping all over the ground manifesting demons...people with foam running down their faces who had just barfed all over themselves. They were screeching like animals. They were bringing people with chains on them that were tied. This is frenzy, people. This is not calm, this is not orderly. This is frenzy, this is frantic.³⁸

People falling, violently shaking and levitating, shouting and screaming, making all manner of animal noises, howling, screeching, and laughing hysterically and uncontrollably, creates an atmosphere of physical chaos and confusion, in which demonic activity is commonly mistaken for a "wave of the Spirit."

On one hand, Wimber is having people look for "signs" of healing by the Holy Spirit that, on the other hand, appear no different from those indicating demonic possession. Confusion and deception could not get worse than this. Because Wimber's sources of information are equal in his mind, he incorporates all manner of conjecture into his teaching as "truth."

Scripture tells us that God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints (I Corinthians 14:33). We are not told that these phenomena happened to the crowd in Luke 4:40-41. These are the insertions made by Wimber based on his observations of phenomena at his church and at Fuller, and an intense desire to put a "biblical" wrap on those experiences. Again we are asked to believe Wimber's interpolation of what God is telling us in His Word by what He's *not* saying to us in His Word.

Some suggestion from Wimber prior to healing sessions leads people into these behaviors. However, other phenomena are spontaneous, and the result of actual occult power brought on through unbiblical practices. Wimber is not unaware of the power of suggestion. In discussing the healing of headaches, backaches and muscular tension in his healing tapes, he states that although we have no accounts of these specific healings in Scripture, Jesus must have healed them "since these

problems respond quite rapidly to suggestion and religious healing.³⁹

This is one more example of teaching from what the Word of God *doesn't* say, and reveals the heavy psychological input in Wimber's thinking and practices. It is also important to note that Wimber implies that Jesus was a "religious" healer, placing Him in the context of a healing practitioner.

Inner Healing

A special form of occult healing known as "inner healing" has become widespread in many Christian circles. However, this practice has no scriptural basis and opens up participants to dangerous occult influence. F.V. Scott notes that,

This practice is used by a pastor or counselor to "heal the memories" of those having emotional or spiritual problems. Advocates believe that by taking a person back into the past, using meditation or visualization, Jesus Christ can enter that past traumatic event and "heal" it. Wimber, in his book, *Power Healing*, refers to it as a process, a step-by-step practice that can be learned by any Christian if certain guidelines are followed.⁴⁰

Wimber's inner healing practice borrows extensively from extra-biblical sources including Agnes Sanford, Francis MacNutt, and John and Paula Sandford, among others. It draws on their theories about "healing the inner man." The inner healers' work is based, in turn, on that of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung. Jung was an occultist who actually had a spirit guide communicating with him. In fact, Carl Gustav Jung said, "I had great difficulty to control my thoughts. There was a demon in me." Teaching based upon sources such as these can in no way be reconciled with biblical truth. The idea that any "truth" that would affect a believer could come from ungodly men is refuted by Paul:

Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (I Corinthians 2:13-14)

No one who has a spirit guide is being taught anything by the Holy Spirit. Speaking of the source of truth in the believer's life, Jesus said:

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. (John 16:13-14)

Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. (John 14:17 emphasis added)

The Holy Spirit guides us into all spiritual truth that we need for doctrine and practice to serve God according to His will. He uses the Word of God to fulfill His principal mission: to reveal to the world who Jesus Christ is, and what He's done for all mankind.

Inner healing has been known for years in psychological circles as regression therapy, and in occult circles as reliving a past life, or remote viewing. Wimber actually castigates the Church and glorifies secular psychology in his defense of inner healing:

The connection between sin and sickness is being brought to our attention again remarkably, not by the Church, but by psychologists and doctors who recognize that much, if not most, physical sickness has an emotional component.⁴¹

If prayer, Bible study and the power of the Holy Spirit are not enough for saints today to deal with life and problems, then the saints of old, including the apostle Paul, must have been greatly lacking. Despite his many hardships revealed in Scripture, Paul was able to function and rejoice in the Lord without the help of psychoanalysis. Throughout Church history Christians have managed the same, and leaders such as Luther, Calvin, Wesley, Spurgeon and Moody should have been at a great disadvantage without the "insights" of modern psychology. Clearly they were not at a disadvantage, and we need not be either. It is a dangerous heresy to insist that we must accept this new "revelation" by psychologists or live deficient lives.

In a *CIB Bulletin* Dave Hunt deals with the blending of psychology and Christianity:

Christ did not say, "if you continue in my word...you shall know part of the truth and you shall be made partially free. There is more truth yet to be revealed through godless humanists that will liberate future generations more completely than I can now free you through my Word and my Spirit alone." Yet that is the teaching of "Christian psychology." In *Can You Trust Psychology* (p.97) Gary Collins writes: "The Bible speaks to human needs...But God in his goodness also has allowed us [including Freud, Jung, et al?] to discover psychological truths about human behavior and counseling that are never mentioned in Scripture but are consistent with the written Word of God and helpful to people facing the problems of modern living."⁴²

Collins' statement is another example of the subtle redefinition whereby "biblical" no longer means derived from God's Word, but derived elsewhere, then declared to be "consistent with" Scripture.

Wimber relates that inner healing "is something that is new to the fellowship and we do not have a great deal of understanding of it yet."⁴³ Despite this, he advocates using it to determine the purpose of God in someone's life, and to reinterpret their experiences. New or old, the practice is not found in Scripture, which instead tells us to recognize our new life in Christ. (II Corinthians 5:17; Philippians 3:13-14; Colossians 2:9-10, 3:1-3; Titus 3:5-7; Romans 12:2; Luke 9:62; Matthew 11:28; Psalms 103:11-12).

Although there are no scriptural examples of Jesus or anyone in the early Church going into a person's past to heal them of painful memories, Wimber and other inner healers continue to believe the practice is valid. We are not talking about a simple counseling session, but a concept which involves clearly occultic and dangerous practices.

According to Wimber's theology, "Healing is Forgiveness of Sin."⁴⁴ By making such a connection between healing and forgiveness, Wimber tries to justify his emphasis on the inner healing ministry. He relates the following as an example of inner healing:

A few months ago I was walking into the back room....

There was a young lady there and she wanted me to pray for her. So, I walked towards her. I saw superimposed over her—her body—but it was wrapped around like with a binding all the way around her body. I said, "What's wrong?" And she said, "I don't know." I said, "I think you are bound by something." And on the cords it said "unforgiveness." I said, "I think you're all bound with unforgiveness." She said, "I don't think so." "Is there anyone you feel unforgiveness for?" She said, "No." I said, "That's funny, I've never missed before. That's weird." I asked the Lord what is that, and I noticed in the picture that the thing that was binding her went right into her shoulders—that they were her own arms. And I realized, and I said out loud, "The person you're not forgiving is you." She just started sobbing.⁴⁵

While there is no biblical basis for this activity, there is much occultic evidence for it. Can you imagine Jesus telling the woman caught in adultery to simply forgive herself? Was this ever an injunction from either Jesus or the apostles?

The same inner healing visualization techniques were used by John Wimber at a pastors' conference in order to receive forgiveness from Jesus:

Put down your Bibles and notebooks, close your eyes and empty your mind of all thoughts. Imagine now that you are in a very beautiful, peaceful meadow in the mountains. Can you see the beautiful green grass, the yellow flowers? Take yourself to the most beautiful place you can and see what you want to there. Can you see Jesus walking through the forest to your meadow? It's just you and Jesus there and you feel a gentle warm breeze blow as Jesus comes towards you. Jesus beckons you to a well near the edge of the meadow. That's the well filled with blood from Immanuel's veins. See Jesus lowering the pail into the well of his blood and drawing it up. Now see Jesus dipping a ladle into the pail and pouring the blood over you. Over your head, your shoulders completely covering you from head to toe. Can you

feel the peace as the blood flows from your head to your toes? Feel the forgiveness of your sins. I tell you, in Jesus' name, your sins are forgiven! Now just imagine Jesus putting his arm around you and walking with you back into the forest. Feel his love for you. Feel the peace. Look into his eyes and see the love that he has for you.⁴⁶

This is simply an occultic visualization exercise using Christian imagery. Jesus cannot be summoned through our imagination. Nor can we receive forgiveness from God by visualizing it. Scripture tells us how to receive forgiveness from God:

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

In his book, *Beyond Seduction*, Dave Hunt muses that inner healers, such as MacNutt and the Linn Brothers (whom Wimber endorses and whose books sell briskly at Vineyard Fellowships), might just as well have people visualize Ronald McDonald or Mickey Mouse as guides in their healing.⁴⁷ The concept is not biblical but Jungian, so what difference does it make whether the guide is Jesus or the tooth fairy? In fact, Ruth Carter Stapleton describes an occasion where Jesus failed to heal, so Mary was called upon, and she was successful.⁴⁸

Wimber also dedicates his *Healing: A Biblical and Historical Perspective* seminar series to inner healing teachers Morton Kelsey and Francis MacNutt:

I would like to express my appreciation to Morton Kelsey and Francis MacNutt for their valuable insights and information. They have made a significant contribution in the area of healing.⁴⁹

Wimber himself is aware of occultic entities in relation to inner healing:

Now listen to this people, because you've gotta hear this: not everyone who comes up to you and presses you to be healed ought to be prayed for. Learn to do what the Father's doing. Some people's soul force will kill you. It will stop you from praying for the sick. Their soul force will wear you down. Move with the Spirit—what He's doing—not what you're doing. Not everyone who asks you ought to be prayed for.⁵⁰

Where in Scripture is a "soul force" spoken of? Or its "wearing down" those who pray for the sick? This is not biblical teaching but occultic.

Agnes Sanford, who was responsible for bringing many New Age and occultic ideas into the Church, describes in her book, *The Healing Light*, a "soul force" very similar to Wimber's. She presents "God" as a "life force" which she says is in everyone and everything [pantheism] as a form of electricity or energy.⁵¹

Wimber also draws material from David A. Seamonds' book, *Healing of Memories*, (stocked by Vineyard bookstores and cited in the bibliography and footnotes of Wimber's *Power Healing*). Seamonds writes:

The real question is not whether a practice appears in the Bible in the specific form or language we use today. Rather, the question is whether it is contradictory to or consistent with principles stated in Scripture.⁵²

But when the "principles" themselves are defined by human conjecture rather than Scripture, this statement becomes meaningless. "Biblical" doesn't mean that you derive your material from any source you choose, and then make it semantically compatible with Scripture; "biblical" means derived from Scripture itself.

True biblical ministry to souls has always existed in the form of prayer and the application of the Word of God in a person's life, along with their surrender to the Word of God and to the power of the Holy Spirit. The real problem with inner healing is that it undermines the work of Christ on the cross, and thus it is an alteration of the Gospel. Faith in the unaltered Gospel of Christ is what changes and heals people. This has been the message of Christianity for 2,000 years, through which we can say with Paul:

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,

I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:13-14 emphasis added)

And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power. (Colossians 2:10 emphasis added)

The early believers did this without the help of humanistic psychology, and Scripture enjoins us to do so as well. Paul also did this without the assistance of any form of "inner healing."

GHOSTBUSTERS, INC.?

Can Christians be possessed by demons? According to Scripture, *no*; according to John Wimber, *yes*. In addition to using information received from demons as a source of "truth" for his teachings, Wimber uses experience and conjecture to prove the presence of demons in Christians. He uses this same procedure in casting them out, stating in his tapes on healing that,

Healing has to do with touch. Demonized people were never touched. Do not touch a person manifesting demons, speak to them. Command the demons out of them and then touch them and heal them. In the spirit you can see a face imposed over the person's face.⁵³

Wimber goes on to discuss demonic effects on Christians:

Many Christians have bondage to sin. There will be physical manifestations while praying for a person. A stiffening of the limbs. They'll begin breathing rather deeply, then they'll go into hyperventilation. Eyes will roll back into their heads. These are Christians who have lent themselves to sin and have gotten into bondage for it.⁵⁴

Coupled with the false belief that Christians can be possessed, this leaves no Christian safe from the convoluted scrutiny of those who may be looking for reasons to believe that others are "possessed." How can spirits be properly discerned by those who have confused a demonic presence with the indwelling Holy Spirit?

Wimber bases his teaching on demonization on information allegedly given him by demons which suggest that demons need bodies in which to move about:

There are many demons that don't have a body. Having a body [for a demon] is like having a car. They want to have a car so they can get around. If they don't have a body, they're a second class demon. They're not first class. I'm not kidding you. That's how it works. So, to them, having a body is a big deal.⁵⁵

In talking about what Wimber calls "religious demons" that "like to go to church," he says,

The name of Jesus doesn't mean anything to them. Many of the demons are named Jesus. When you cast them out they'll tell you their name is Jesus. That's how the person knows Jesus; they accepted Jesus into their heart. I'm not kidding you. I've cast demons out that were named Jesus. I can see that we're getting a little deep. You're not used to these ideas are you?⁵⁶

No Christian should ever get used to these ideas. And the question arises, how can Wimber trust the "Jesus" he hears from, particularly when that Jesus tells him he can go beyond Scripture for doctrine and practice? Wimber further states that during a particular deliverance,

Three or four of the demons that came out were religious demons—they had all been born again. You've got to understand that there's more to it than just a pat answer.⁵⁷

There is no answer in Scripture for such a concept. One can hardly imagine a more blasphemous idea than "born-again" demons. The idea that a person would receive a demon while receiving Jesus as their Savior, is equally blasphemous. Scripture assures us that God would never allow such a thing:

And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. (Acts 2:21)

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him? (Luke 11:13)

Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." (John 14:13)

Whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. (John 15:16)

These Scriptures leave no room whatsoever for one to receive a demon in the name of Jesus. To say otherwise is to go beyond anything that could be considered biblical and into the occult. Dr. Don Lewis of Regent College states,

His [Wimber's] use of the Scripture is highly problematic. His starting place seems to be his own experience and Scripture is

drawn in to proof-text his own position...People were taught a theology of healing based on the observation of phenomenological responses (shaking, stiffening, respiration, laughter, fluttering of eyelids, etc.) and were encouraged to use such subjective criteria as the basis on which to evaluate spiritual responses.⁵⁸

At one moment, Wimber tells us that the phenomena associated with his ministry are manifestations of demons in Christians, and in another breath he tells us they are the manifestations of the presence of the Holy Spirit. You can't have it both ways. Scripture clears this mess up very efficiently:

And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. (Ephesians 4:30)

Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts. (2 Corinthians 1:22)

For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. (I Corinthians 6:20)

But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. (I Corinthians 6:17)

The believer is sealed with the Holy Spirit and cannot be possessed by a demon. Both body and spirit are the rightful property of God once a person is born again. No devil can touch him without God's permission.

We are united with God. The devil can't inhabit the Holy Spirit or the believer since they are one. The idea of a demon co-mingling with the Holy Spirit and "sharing" a person, is not only unscriptural and blasphemous, but utterly disgusting to even contemplate. It also calls into question the sovereignty and authority of God and His Word. Colossians 1:13 says that God "hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:" Darkness can't be a part of the believer. This of necessity would preclude the presence of a demon.

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. (I Corinthians 2:12)

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but

ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. (Romans 8:14)

Satan had nothing in Jesus because He is the Only Begotten of the Father. Therefore, if we are sons by adoption, Satan has nothing in us:

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? (II Corinthians 6:14)

The rational answer is none. There is no place for the demons to have equal access to the believer that God does. Those teachings of Wimber's are based on his observations and consequent definition of these observations at various church meetings and seminars where unbridled chaos was induced and a cogent explanation was needed.

DO NOT JUDGE

It appears as if Wimber is not interested in applying the judgment of Scripture to his teaching or healing ministry. His attitude is stated as the following: "John said that God told him not to read anything critical of his ministry."⁵⁹ Wimber has also said,

I've determined in my heart, I'll never, ever, answer another spectator's questions the rest of my life. I'm not interested in their theories, their speculations, their criticisms, their confusions, or their comments. From this point forward I'm only going to dialogue with those people who are in the arena. And in the place of the touch of God. I've been in the arena, in the place of the touch of God—a participant, not merely a spectator.⁶⁰

It seems as though Wimber perceives anyone not involved in his "arena" as unworthy of being heard.

I was in John Wimber's office the day he received one of many calls from Dave Hunt prior to the publication of *The Seduction of Christianity*. Wimber told his secretary, "I'm not taking any calls from him." But then, that evening at a service at the Vineyard in Anaheim, he said how hurt he was that many, including Hunt, had criticized his ministry without even bothering to bring their concerns to his attention before airing their accusations.

For some time Wimber has said that he would not respond to criticism for three reasons:

- 1) Personal prophecy telling him not to defend himself;
- 2) Belief that Scripture forbid airing differences in a public forum;
- 3) Pacifism: one should turn the other cheek.⁶¹

But he has now determined that he will respond to what he considers "slander and lies" and "false accusations." He has also promised to publish responses to legitimate, constructive criticism and "willingly submit to the correcting authority of Scripture, knowing that in all things it brings life."⁶²

This would be encouraging, except that Wimber does not believe that his spiritual practices are unscriptural, simply because he doesn't believe Scripture is the final authority on them. Because certain occult methodologies, inner healing and psychological integration are not spelled out, scriptural prohibitions against incorporating the wisdom of the world and vain philosophy are not applied to these things if practiced in Jesus' name. To call them evil, or to call out those who practice them, is considered "false accusations," "slander and lies."

Wimber has been confronted on the unbiblical nature of his signs and wonders methodologies, but has refused to repent of them. He resents any implication of heresy in his teachings, and has said, "It's not a loving thing to do to call your brother a heretic."⁶³ This is a common tactic of Wimber—to demonize his opponents before they have a chance to expose his teachings to the light of Scripture. It could have just as easily been the Maharishi or any other cult leader saying that. In an odd way this illustrates the paradigm shift to an Eastern world view that Wimber has made and encourages us to make. Wimber deflects the attention from his teaching or practice to the one examining the teaching or practice by trying to marginalize the person reacting to the event.

Contrary to Wimber's assertion that it's not a loving thing to call your brother a heretic, it's more accurate to say it's not a loving thing for your brother to be a heretic.

If exposing the teachings of John Wimber as heresy is unloving, then the apostle Paul must be considered the most unloving of all. With very strong words, he reveals the heart of God towards spiritual deception:

But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. (Galatians 1:8)

NEW AGE OVERTONES

Like the Vineyard, the New Age and the occult authenticate their belief systems by manifestations of the "miraculous." The New Age says, "It works, therefore it must be true." This is so similar to the Vineyard's approach to the supernatural that we can say they are one and the same approach. This is the "delusion"—replacing true faith with counterfeit "signs and wonders."

Like the New Age, Wimber's theology is focused not on Jesus Christ or the Word, but on power and force:

That's what separates dead doctrine from the living reality. There's a force of grace, there's a force of faith, that must be manifest in our midst.⁶⁴

This is an occultic concept being presented as the work of the Holy Spirit! Scripture never speaks of grace or faith as a "force." This is characteristic of lack of attention to sound doctrine, and a surrender to the forces of darkness, calling evil good, and good evil.

The New Age teaches that within man is the "Christ spirit" or the "Christ consciousness" that needs to be realized. Next comes realization of the universal cosmic "god force." This is Hinduism—the false belief that everyone and everything is "God," and we are each a part of a god that is only a "force" without personality.

The next "quantum leap" of New-Age evolution is the illumination of the soul in other "dimensions" to personal godhood. This step ties in very nicely with the Vineyard concept of self-authenticating experiences. The logical conclusion of the acceptance of self-authentication of experiences and thoughts is, you have them, and they are of God, because you are a god.

As a former member of Vineyard Ministries International staff, I have been to many seminars and conferences conducted by John Wimber. I cannot recount the number of times I've seen openly occult and demonic manifestations occurring. There were always large crowds of people surrounding them, extending their hands, "blessing the work of the Spirit." They had no sense that what was happening was demonic in origin, or that it was a manifestation of evil.

The lack of discernment among Vineyard adherents indicates the direction of Wimber's thought—a dualistic separation of Scripture from its own authority and vitality, as if it is dead without the injection of some "force."

The Gnostic Jesus

It would seem that Wimber has actually become Gnostic in his approach to the Person of Jesus. He has said, "We have over emphasized his God nature and under emphasized his man nature."⁶⁵ This has been the argument of New Thought and other heretical philosophies that wish to focus on deeds of perceived righteousness rather than on the righteousness of Christ imputed through faith. It also makes assumptions of human limitation on Jesus that are neither warranted by Scripture nor consistent with His Person as God the Son.

Wimber says,

Haven't you been taught that Jesus knows all things? There are many times in the gospels when Jesus doesn't know and he has to ask questions.⁶⁶

This assumption of the motivation of Christ's questions impugns the full deity of Jesus and reduces Him to the level of a mere man. Wimber has the same attitude toward the healing ministry of Jesus when he states:

Jesus often ministered on the faith of others. Jesus often rode the crest of the faith of others. I believe there were times when Jesus had little or no faith for the healing of the individual. I believe that there were times when He had more faith flowing that at other times.⁶⁷

Once again, Wimber has brought the Author of Life, God With Us, to the level of a mortal man in need of "faith" to fulfill the purpose of the Father. In this he has effectively denied that Jesus Christ is fully God.

Wimber promotes further confusion by endorsing those who teach obvious doctrinal error. An example is his statement that "Robert Schuller is one of the greatest evangelical proclaimers of the gospel of this generation."⁶⁸ Schuller, like his mentor, the late Norman Vincent Peale, is an unabashed humanist who preaches a gospel of "possibility thinking." He is quoted in his own magazine *Possibilities*:

Nothing exists except God. There is no other reality...The Christ spirit dwells in every human being whether the person knows it or not.⁶⁹

This is not the Gospel of Christ, but another, humanistic gospel which will not save. It is the New Age doctrine of releasing the Christ-spirit within and awaiting the appearance of the "Christed

one" to be revealed to the world as anti-Christ. By endorsing Robert Schuller, Wimber endorses the rankest of heresy. Schuller's statement is in line with the occultic message of New Agers.

ROMAN CATHOLIC BELIEFS

Wimber's extra-biblical forays have led him to accept practices which the Church has rejected as unbiblical for centuries, such as the use of relics (human remains and objects they've touched):

In the Catholic Church for over a 1,200 year period people were healed as a result of touching the relics of the saints. We Protestants have difficulty with that. Why? But we healers shouldn't, because there's nothing theologically out of line with that.⁷⁰

The use of relics is an utterly pagan concept based on the belief in fetishes. It is not justified by citing the single Scripture reference to special miracles worked through Paul "so that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them" (Acts 19:12). Paul was alive at the time, not dead. And the miracles are attributed to God working through him, not through the handkerchiefs or aprons. The use of relics of the dead is tied not to scriptural healing, but to necromancy or contact with the dead. Furthermore, Paul was an apostle, and those miracles were done to authenticate his ministry and authority. The use of relics is a form of idolatry and is a sign of the loss of the consciousness of the true God. This is not biblical Christianity!

Wimber is not only open to such Roman Catholic practice, but actively encourages the reunification of Protestants with the church of Rome. During a Vineyard pastors' conference, he went so far as to apologize to the Catholic church on behalf of all Protestants. On another occasion he actually asked the archbishop from the Los Angeles archdiocese to stand up in the front of the auditorium, then proceeded to ask this representative of the Catholic Church to accept his apology on behalf of all Protestants.⁷¹ Wimber has stated,

The pope, who is very responsive to the charismatic movement, and is himself a born again evangelical, is preaching the Gospel as clear as anyone in the world today.⁷²

The pope has dedicated his office to the "Virgin Mary," and has worshiped at many of her shrines. He attributes to the "Virgin Mary" his preservation and recovery from an assassination attempt. We begin to see why Wimber says the pope is open to the charismatic movement. Lack of sound biblical doctrine leaves charismatics open to embracing the Vatican's lies. Dave Hunt, who has done extensive research on this subject, summarizes the pope's true position:

The Pope promotes a humanistic ecumenism. He recently declared that the efforts of "Christians, Muslims, Jews, Buddhists" were unleashing profound spiritual energies in the world and bringing about a "new climate of peace."⁷³

An apparition of Mary at Medjugorje, Yugoslavia, has allegedly said, "Everyone worships God in his own way with peace in our hearts."⁷⁴

There is no ecumenism in the teaching of Jesus, no thought of reunification with anyone who would distort or oppose the Word of God. He offers instead the warning that "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35). John Wimber ignores this in his endorsement of the pope's "gospel."

HOW DID WE GET HERE?

In the mid to late 1960s, there were profound changes taking place in America—changes to our social, political, and spiritual institutions. The entire cultural landscape was in upheaval. All the old assumptions, (i.e., the Western-rational, science-based understanding of the universe and our understanding of social relationships) were challenged and discarded by the "elite." Consciousness was being expanded and raised by the use of hallucinogenic drugs and forays into the occult and Eastern mysticism.

There was a concentrated assault on our biblical moral base and on the concept of morality itself. Relativism became the moral philosophy *du jour*.

As society became more permissive and tolerant, so did the Church. Seminary training adopted the German school of theology with a strong mix of psychology, Marxist social conscience, and existential philosophy. Liberal views of Scripture were brought into the Church by the theological establishment, the Jesus People, and the charismatic movement's experiential version of Christianity (essentially a psy-

chological, cathartic experience). These subjective views became the measure of what is considered "holy," "anointed," "enlightened," and "blessed by God."

This attitude of experimentation was transferred into the churches as the young "Jesus People" came from the counterculture and brought with them their drug- and Eastern mystic-induced "revelations." These things I know with certainty because I was one of those counterculture "Jesus People." (The term "Jesus People" was a media creation and I use it only as a point of reference.)

The evangelical church leadership were profoundly intimidated by the incursion of these young people with their experiences and claim to superior knowledge, while the theological liberals from primarily the German thought in theology embraced and mentored these young radicals. The theologians found in the new infusion of radical, social, political and spiritual concepts of these young people a fertile field in which to sow their aberrant theology, and to produce a harvest of very strange fruit—fruit that was not biblical in its origin or in its outcome. They eventually came to fill the pulpits of many of the mainstream denominational churches.

Accordingly, the "new paradigm" of the liberal theologians which is imposed upon Scripture (although not derived from Scripture), was presented as the need the Church must address in order to be relevant. Since this language is from the left, we find a strong impulse towards global unity, not only in a political sense, but in a religious sense. We are finding strong calls for reunification with the Catholic Church. This can only occur if a sufficient number of non-Catholics submit to the authority of the pope, or at least agree to recognize him as the central figurehead of Christianity. There is also a growing willingness to extend fellowship to the Mormons and the New Age/occult "churches" such as the Unity Church.

This is promoted without regard for doctrinal purity and, in some cases, even a rudimentary acknowledgment of the basic tenets of Scripture relative to the person and work of Jesus Christ.

In short, the agenda and the language of the secular left is being galvanized with the words "the truth," and is presented as the Church's agenda. This has long been the agenda of Satan, and is the result of a massive infiltration by

satanic agents into our seminaries and churches.

Many in the charismatic movement had already experienced this permissiveness and tolerance of a low view of Scripture, and exhibited the obvious signs of heresy and lack of sound biblical teaching. The other more traditional denominations maintained a veneer of biblical orthodoxy. However, the inoculation against the truth had come in through the "Trojan Horse" of psychology, permitting every deviancy the counterculture had, challenging traditional orthodoxy and orthopraxy.

They did this in the name of science and with the blessing of virtually every evangelical leader in America. The seed of the lie was planted deep within the soil of the Church—the satanic seed of deception, being watered and cared for by the very ones that were looked to as the leaders of God's flock. The false shepherds of the flock of God tended the garden of Satan in full view of the people of God and were seldom challenged. As God has said in His Word, "Woe unto those shepherds..."

With this change from a biblically-based understanding of man and his condition to a pseudo-scientific understanding (really nothing more than a rationalization based on psychological theory), there came into the Church acceptance of every type of experience. Because all sources of "truth" were being taught as equal, why not accept as equally valid those found in the occult and Eastern mysticism?

The Church must wake up and see that the deception is strong and invasive. The problem with people that are deceived is that they *are* deceived. And because of that fact, they are not open to the truth. They don't know what they don't know, and they don't know that they don't know it. Reread that; it's an important distinction to make when dealing with people who are deceived.

It is the responsibility of church leadership to expose the "sword" (Ezekiel 33:1-5) of heresies which come upon us. If this is not done, the result is a proliferation of false teachings, which can and do cause spiritual death. Dealing with heresy is a serious matter, and involves confrontation. But it is not unloving. What is unloving is to leave people vulnerable to deceitful doctrine and practices which will destroy them spiritually. For this reason, as well as the command of Scripture, exposing heresy within the Church is a necessary charge given to leaders.

OUR SURE FOUNDATION

Who is the final authority for the teaching and practices of the church? If it is not the Bible, then the authority of God has been replaced with a human agency. It is clear that the Vineyard has drifted deep into psychology and occultism through the leadership and teaching of John Wimber. Christians should beware of this and any ministry which does not found itself unwaveringly upon the Word of God, or that utilizes "special revelations."

The doctrine of Christ forms the entire basis for the Christian life, which is not a mystical experience, but a day-to-day reality. What we believe will determine how we live. Love, joy, peace and the power of God come not through experience, but through faith grounded in the Word of God. To abide in Christ is to abide in His Word, and we must practice and teach from lives that are consistent with this. Sound doctrine is not restrictive of the work of the Holy Spirit, but rather identifies it, and separates all that is inconsistent with the Spirit and His work. And finally, it encourages the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer and in the Church.

It is my sincere hope that the Lord has spoken His word of warning to you, His Church, and that you will flee the sword of heresy that is upon our land. God bless you. *Sola Scriptura.* Ω

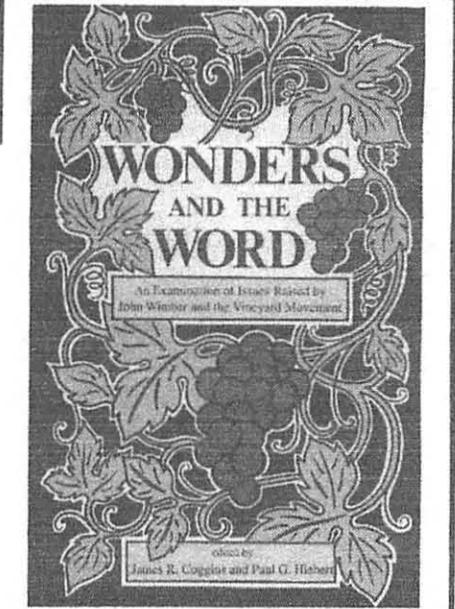
John Goodwin was a Vineyard pastor for eight years. He traveled extensively with John Wimber for four years. Some negative rumors about his personal life and character have been spread since leaving the Vineyard. We have checked on these rumors from reliable sources and found them to be untrue. A/JD

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